



# DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUES: CHINESE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA AND THE BRITISH MEDIA

## ABSTRACT

An examination into Chinese Development in Africa, the British Media's coverage of it, and what it means for development as a whole.

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## Abstract

Chinese development stories from Africa have frequently appeared in the British media in recent years bringing these Chinese development efforts into the public eye. This research paper seeks to examine Chinese development in Africa, its portrayal in the British media and its ultimate effect on development dialogues. The aim of research is to build on the work of Mawdsley (2008) and establish changes in the dialogue since their study was conducted. It argues that Chinese development is often subjected to framing which leads to unjustified criticism by approaching this topic from a UK-centric position in the media. By utilising a content analysis examining quantitatively and qualitatively, an understanding of the British print media sphere regarding Chinese development in Africa was garnered. Further interviews with journalists shed further light on this topic and highlighted the shortcomings of the UK media when examining development. This paper finds that the lack of critical engagement regarding Chinese development in Africa ultimately stifles development dialogue by taking such a UK-centric perspective to a topic which should ultimately incorporate a more inclusive approach giving voice to African interests.

### Key words:

Africa, China, development, media framing, journalism, development dialogue, infrastructure, UK.

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## I. Introduction

From highways in Ethiopia (Chakrabarty, 2016), to fish meal plants in the Gambia (Urbina, 2021), the African Union (Marsh, 2018) headquarters in Addis Ababa to oil pipelines in East Africa (Adisu, Sharkey and Okoroafo, 2010) China's footprint of development can be noted across the African continent from Algeria to Zimbabwe. China has emerged as Africa's largest trade partner over the last 12 years (IISD, 2021). Continued investment and development projects have shown China's prowess at initiating and carrying out huge infrastructural development projects which have been seen across the continent. Chinese foreign direct investment flows have increased from a mere \$74.8 million in 2003 to \$5.4 billion in 2018, which highlights the rapid increase in investment in the continent (IISD, 2021). This increase in development funds has been rapid but still China lags behind the UK, France, USA and Netherlands when it comes to FDI stocks in Africa (Garcia-Herrero and Xu, 2019) with these European regions still maintaining ties from their colonial presence in Africa.

Despite what some proponents of Chinese development regularly refer to as a mutually beneficial relationship where China can invest in and contribute to development in many African regions (Hinga and Yiguan, 2013), there is debate as to the intentions of Chinese interests in Africa and how they aim to achieve this development (Cheru and Obi, 2011). On one hand, the criticisms of Chinese investments are primarily headed by Western media sources stemming from North America and Western Europe who justifiably call out human rights abuses and often a disregard for local populations. On the other hand, Western media sources have been critiqued and said to have an anti-China bias which focuses on the negative stories regarding Chinese development rather than the positive. Recently Spanish journalist Javier Garcia of EFE News Agency Spain based in Beijing decided to leave journalism due to misinformation and manipulation of facts about China in Western media (Xinhua, 2021). From sensationalist stories such as the "Wuhan leak" suggesting Covid was released from a lab in China to the framing of other news stories, China often gets portrayed through a negative frame in the Western media.

Mawdsley (2008), examines the media coverage of China in British broadsheet newspapers to create a broad overview of the representation of China. At the time when the paper was written, there was a huge rise in the influence and presence of China in Africa, but this

presence has markedly increased once more. Mawdsley (2008) notes the complexities of understanding Sino-African relations and how different circumstances and situations across the continent garner different responses from the media and there is variation in the coverage. Despite the complexities and variations, Mawdsley (2008) acknowledges the discursive patterns in the media outlets which she finds “act to systematically endorse images of African weakness, Western trusteeship and Chinese ruthlessness”. From this Mawdsley describes 4 themes she explores that highlight the British media’s coverage of China and which help set the foundation for this study.

*a) a tendency to homogenise China and Chinese actors and to ‘isolate’ them from other business interests in particular.*

*b) a decided preference for focussing on China’s negative impacts on the continent, and within that, on issues and places of violence, disorder and corruption (e.g. Zimbabwe, Sudan, Angola) over other negative issues (e.g. trade imbalances).*

*c) a tendency to portray Africans as victims or villains; and*

*d) within these articles on China-Africa, a frequently complacent account of the role and interest of different western actors in Africa that is not necessarily the case in wider reporting on the West’s impacts and influences in Africa (Mawdsley, 2008)*

This research does not hope to propose Chinese development in Africa as the panacea for the development issues the region has seen. Chinese investment is not without its flaws like every major development policy before it. Chinese investment has been critiqued for extractive policies, for employing Chinese workers instead of African ones, and the huge debts accrued by poor African states are not to be understated (Large, 2008). However, as Bräutigam (2011) consistently argues, Chinese involvement in Africa is constantly subjected to unfair criticism. Development for much of Africa’s history before and after colonisation has been marred by contributing to conflict, corruption, poverty, misappropriation of funds, and paternalistic relations (Jalata, 2013, Amin, 1982, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Ultimately the West through state institutions, globalised international institutions, multinational corporations, and NGOs all have influenced Africa’s growth trajectory and all have ultimately influenced its underdevelopment, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) calls Africa in this regard the “post-colonial neo-colonial world” highlighting that despite decolonization the

West still has their claws in Africa and underpin the struggles of African development. With this precedent of development outcomes, Chinese development policy as such does not have a difficult act to follow when the failings of Western development practices are regarded. With this in mind, this paper would hope to examine the media framing of Chinese development in British broadsheet newspapers and what this means for development policy as a whole.

The media, and British media included, are constantly considered to be a force to influence public opinion and have the position to create narratives on issues such as development. As such the media coverage of Chinese investment in Africa or any other form of development should be objective and just, to establish a broader outlook on development this paper argues. Chinese development is undoubtedly subjected to a huge amount of criticism and is associated in the Western media with several negative externalities. This has the potential to create one narrative of development which is Western-centric and negates or ignores some of the benefits of Chinese development policies in Africa (Stokke, 2009) creating an internal discontent regarding Chinese development where Western media penetration is high in Africa. (Sautman and Hairong, 2009). Compounding this framing is the fact that Western development simply isn't held to the same level of scrutiny that Chinese development is in the Western media, which again contributes to hindering open development discourse, this became apparent during the interview process with the journalists.

This research seeks to establish the media framing of Chinese development in Africa and establish whether this content could contribute to stifling development dialogue and potentially create a hegemonic Western-centric development paradigm. Ultimately it is hoped that this can also show the profound effect and responsibility that the media has in leading the discourse surrounding development which could be applied to another number of scenarios. It is important to note that this research doesn't attempt to promote or forward any one paradigm or development discourse but proposes that there should be more critical dialogue regarding development, and media bias and prejudices shouldn't contribute to gatekeeping development.

Given this background of development theory, the influence of media and the current Chinese relations with 53 of Africa's 54 countries (Pairault, 2021) and 43 African states signing

Memorandums of Understanding joining the Belt and Road Initiative (Nedopil, 2022), this paper seeks to answer the following question:

### Research Question

*“How is Chinese development in Africa portrayed by the British media and what are the implications for development paradigms?”*

## II. Framework and Literature

### 1. Development

In order to understand development and what this piece of research hopes to ascertain it is important to understand what development is, where it has come from, and what current development aims to achieve. Defining development, however, is no easy task. There is no one notion which can encompass all development. The course of development has changed, from original development strategies which targeted financial investments and economic liberalisation to achieve development at the inception of development studies some 40 years ago (Fowler, 2013), to more holistic definitions of development which are more targeted at ameliorating poverty such as Amartya Sen's capabilities approach to understanding development (Fowler, 2013, Sen, 1988). This change in the course of development trajectory has seen a turn from more economic notions of development which led to the failings of structural adjustment in the developing world, and currently, more idealistic forms of development like Sen's capabilities approach have come to the forefront, which values the capability for one to lift themselves out of poverty and the freedoms that are needed to accomplish that (Sen, 1988). As such development now is not just an economic marker but must account for poverty and quality of life also, and the factors that contribute to them. Still, even within these theories of development, there are diverging routes by which states aim to carry out development.

When looking at development it is important to acknowledge the distinction between what Hart (2001) calls big D Development and little d development. Hart recognises the differences between these two forms of development with "Development" referring to a conscious effort or policy which aims to develop regions and create change, and "development" which is seen as an immanent form of development which emerges as a result of capitalistic practices and the patterns of change within society which produce development in this other form. The developmental states such as the East Asian Tigers (Hart, 2001) exemplify characteristics of Big D development as these states put development at the forefront of their policies for example. On the other hand, little d development is a softer

form of development with associations with social capital, and capitalism. NGOs often employ methods to create the societal changes which allow this little d development to take place (Hart, 2001). When it comes to Chinese investment and development projects in Africa what materializes is both big D and little d development and an overlap between the two. Chinese state implemented development from the top including bilateral deals, the Forum on China-Africa Co-operation and large infrastructural developments display the characteristics of this intentional big D development. This big D development also brings about immanent development as the infrastructure and bilateral deals bring about the framework for capitalistic culture to thrive and for this spin-off little d development to occur. On the other hand, Chinese development is not just state lead. Between migrant workers, Chinese state-owned enterprises, Chinese NGOs and even state-owned companies there are dynamics which are conducive to capitalistic development through these stakeholders and the establishment of social capital which contributes to economic development (Fukuyama, 2002). This network of social capital which Chinese development brings about can be exemplified by the development of Mauritius through embedded networks of Chinese entrepreneurs and businesspeople and the introduction of Export-Processing Zones (Bräutigam, 2003) (Bräutigam, Rakner and Taylor 2002). Bräutigam refers to these travelling Chinese entrepreneurs as the “flying geese” and their influence on African development is still occurring today (Bräutigam, 2003) Though perhaps not as tangible as the Big D development, this little d development is made up of many stakeholders among the over 1 million Chinese now living in Africa. From the corner shops which bring foreign goods and trade into a region to Chinese entrepreneurs who provide local and Chinese jobs, they all contribute to development through these capitalistic practices.

Mawdsley and Taggart (2021) describe Chinese development as a blend of d/D development as China rejects the donor state label, instead opting for a policy which aims to create “mutually beneficial economic growth”. This relationship aiming to create mutually beneficial growth veers from previous Western policies of development which have been criticised as paternalistic, and instead, it poses China and Africa in this instance as partners in development. Mawdsley (2018) describes this as the “Southernisation of development”. Despite early assumptions that “South-South” development could provide an alternative to the hegemony of Western development, Mawdsley suggests that South-South development beneath its veneer is globalism underpinned by capitalism and neoliberal ideology. In this

regard, parallels can be drawn between Western development and Chinese development, despite the two forms of development often being pitched against each other.

Western aid and development projects from institutions such as the UN and World Bank have come with conditionalities for the aid recipients (Killick, 1997). This Killick argues has led to conditionality-imposing development institutions being unable to create incentives or punish developing states who do not implement the conditionalities of the aid, and often this money was misappropriated (Killick, 1998). This misappropriation of funds has been a constant struggle for aid programmes as regimes particularly in Africa become propped up by this money through neo-patrimonial relations. Chabal and Daloz (1999), examine African development and come to the theory of “political instrumentalization disorder”. What this theory suggests is that in absence of constraints on political elites in Africa, which would normally be provided by democratic institutions, these elites act in their own self-interest and as such development efforts are stifled by corruption (1999). Surmising this nexus of issues, African states accept conditional aid, but with a lack of strong institutions providing constraints, one sees the misappropriation of aid, which in turn further supports corrupt regimes by financial means.

## 2. Hegemonic Development paradigms

To understand the importance of the media coverage of Chinese development it is important to acknowledge the different development paradigms, and the potential for a hegemonic paradigm to occur: *“Development paradigms often represent, in a condensed form, the prevailing political ideology of donors. A hegemonic development paradigm may function as a gatekeeper that determines what kinds of ideas are feasible and may be picked up and developed, and what ideas are not feasible. It may also influence the way ideas are transformed into practice”* (Stokke, 2009).

This understanding of development paradigms is of utmost importance. By only promoting one development paradigm and creating this hegemony of how aid should be carried out one must assume that this narrows the scope of how development can be carried out and as Stokke (2009) suggests, it acts as a “gatekeeper” to development. Framing

Framing as described by Druckman (2001) can come in two types, framing of communication and framing of thought. Both of these types of framing focus on how information is displayed or essentially through what “frame” information is presented (Druckman, 2001). Framing of communication refers to the use of words, images, phrases and presentation styles by which information is presented (Druckman, 2001). Framing of thought does not refer to the means of communication but rather describes an individual’s perception of a particular situation and what is relevant to understanding (Druckman, 2001). These two styles of framing are understandably linked and are important in influencing each other (Druckman, 2001), and both are present in the British media also. Framing of communication is likely to be present in the articles this research seeks to study how the journalists present such information. Similarly, framing of thought is likely to be observed in the British media presenting itself as what the individual thinks is important. Druckman (2001) shares examples of framing which undoubtedly could be applied to development paradigms and differences in the perceptions of Chinese and Western development. Entman (2007) provides a further examination of what framing is. They describe framing within the organization of bias and highlight framing, priming and agenda setting as the three ways in this branch that the media exerts influence (Entman, 2007). Framing they define as “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (Entman, 2007). Priming then comes hand in hand with framing and encourages the media consumer to think a certain way about the media they consume

*“Framing works to shape and alter audience members’ interpretations and preferences through priming. That is, frames introduce or raise the salience or apparent importance of certain ideas, activating schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way”* (Entman, 2007). The initial stage of this framing revolves around the contests which occur to decide what content gets put on the media agenda which is heavily politicised according to Entman (2007). *“Agenda setting can thus be seen as another name for successfully performing the first function of framing: defining problems worthy of public and government attention. Among other things, agenda problems can spotlight societal conditions, world events, or character traits of a candidate. The second or ‘attribute’ level of agenda setting centrally involves three types of claims that happen to encompass the core business of strategic framing: to highlight the causes of problems, to encourage moral judgments, and to promote favoured. Priming, then, is a name for the goal, the intended effect, of strategic actors’ framing activities.”* Druckman (2007). All of these sub-processes contribute to general framing and influence the consumers of mass media through this means.

Cohen (1963) sums up the effect that framing ultimately has on the general public stating “the media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think but is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about”. Ultimately this coverage of development through framing, priming and agenda setting has a profound impact on the readers and how their view development, which ultimately contributes to development discourse through its penetration in the media and the general public.

### 3. Media Systems

Hallin and Mancini (2004) create a framework for examining media systems. They establish four major dimensions by which media systems in the West can be compared. The four dimensions the authors use to understand the media are the development of media markets, political parallelism, the development of journalistic professionalism and the degree and nature of state intervention in the media system (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). The development of media markets puts emphasis on the development of a strong or weak circulation of a mass-circulation press (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) which is ultimately used to disseminate news. Political parallelism draws on the links between political parties and the media and more broadly on the relations between the media and the major political cleavages in society (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). The development of journalistic standards and professionalism is rather self-explanatory and focuses on the norms which guide journalistic standards in a developed media system (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Finally, the nature and degree of state media intervention in the media also influence the outputs of the media and are essential to understanding media systems (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). As such given these means of understanding Western media systems, there is clear scope for media bias to occur whether through political parallelism of the prominent political elites who are often media owners in the West or through state interests perhaps being espoused through the medium of media articles.

The authors identify three types of media systems by these characteristics. The British media system comes under the realm of the North Atlantic or Liberal model (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). This model outlines that the British media has a broad well-established newspaper circulation, that there tends to be a neutral commercial press, with less partisanship and a

high degree of professionalism, and that the media is market dominated with the exception of state media (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). As such despite the biases and framing this paper seeks to examine, as media systems go, the British media should exhibit professionalism and perhaps the framing may be minimal in comparison to media in other regions. If examining Chinese media outlets for example there is a completely different media terrain with strict censoring and ultimate control from the China Communist Party Committees (CCPCs) making newspapers such as Xinhua, Beijing Daily, and Guangming Daily mouthpieces of the CCP and their interests (Qin, Strömberg, & Wu, 2018). As a media system which is purported to be free and fair, it is therefore important to examine the UK media in spite of this, and how contentious topics such as Chinese development in Africa are portrayed.

### III. Regional Framework

#### 1. Framing of African Development

Vossen and Van Gorp (2017), examine the effect of framing poverty in Africa in the media and how this framing influences perspectives of development. The authors cite an example showing how two different media outlets, individuals, policy experts or politicians can examine the same topic but come to entirely different conclusions. Their example highlights Bill Gates' argument that for every \$1000 reduction in aid a person will die in Africa (Vossen and Van Gorp, 2017). Conversely, Vossen and Van Gorp cite the findings of another journalist Muambi, who proposes that this development aid, proposed by Gates, leads to corruption and stifles African development, ultimately leading to more hardships for the population. Just this example highlights the complexities in the framing of poverty and aid. If the media are to present one side of this case but not the other, a representation which could lead to a hegemonic view of development simply promoting in this instance Gates' Western perspective whilst negating Muambi's perspective from Africa will occur. The media has both the ability to create the discussion regarding development and similarly, frame the discussion (Vossen and van Gorp, 2017). If the British media is representing different sources of development through different frames, then a less than ideal portrayal of development will occur and even a hegemonic view of development could occur. This ties into broader discussions regarding the decolonization of knowledge. Incorporating indigenous knowledge and understanding, and engaging the local communities fails to occur on a meaningful level and instead there is a reliance on the media and the Western framed words of Bill gates in this instance. Akena (2012) highlights this notion and suggests that the suppression of indigenous voices in academia is core to this issue, furthering unequal power structures and leaving a hangover from the colonial period which continues to stifle Africa.

Goetz (2015), provides a work which examined the commonalities and differences between British and Chinese investments in Africa and what has been labelled as "land grabbing" that has come along with this investment. Goetz finds that similar to Bräutigam (2011) the land-intensive projects which China undertakes in Africa are not a "land grab" to help Chinese

food security through agriculture endeavours (Goetz, 2015). Instead, Goetz (2015) finds that land use by both Chinese and British development projects is very similar. Both states intend to use the land for domestic development but also the states intend to create viable projects from which they can profit (Goetz, 2015). The framing of this Chinese development as a landgrab as such is unjustified, but not only that, but it also highlights the unfair scrutiny that Chinese development is placed under by Western media when compared to Western development projects. Goetz (2015) labels this agricultural development as mutually beneficial and dispels just one of the myths of Chinese development in Africa which are propagated by the British media. Chinese investment in agriculture in Africa is well reported but the British equivalent including the 45,000-hectare investment in biofuel agriculture in Tanzania by UK business CAMS group (Cotula, 2009) flies under the radar and is labelled as an agricultural investment rather than a land grab. Cotula furthers this idea of misrepresentation of China's investment in land acknowledging China's own food security from agricultural development within China and ascertains that the investments in Africa are for business interests rather than for extractive agricultural reasons (Cotula, 2013). This example highlights a degree of "British exceptionalism" by the UK media, denouncing Chinese projects in Africa while failing to mention the British activities in Africa which bear a striking resemblance.

## 2. Chinese Development- Myths and Realities

The idea of mutually beneficial development is core to Bräutigam's holistic view of Chinese development in Africa (2011). Critics of Chinese development which have largely come from the media rather than academia describe the use of debt-trap diplomacy to strongarm developing states into giving up access to resources as collateral for development. By creating an insurmountable debt, it is posited that China can use the carrot of debt reprieve to take advantage of a developing state. This supposedly occurred in Sri Lanka with the waiving of Sri-Lankan sovereignty over Hambantota port and granting a Chinese company access to the port region on a 99-year lease (Bräutigam, 2011). In reality, Sri Lanka owed more money to Japan, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank, than it did to China in 2017 (Bräutigam and Rithmire, 2017). Of the \$4.5 billion debt service Sri-Lanka paid in 2017 only 5% of this was due to Hambantota port (Bräutigam and Rithmire, 2021). Given the financial

squeeze the Sri-Lankan government found itself in, China-Harbour offered to lease the port for 99 years to ease their debt burden, and the Sri-Lankan government accepted (Bräutigam and Rithmire, 2021). The alleged “seizing” of the port was little more than a deal to lease out the port to an experienced handler who could efficiently run the port, which had always been the recommendation of both the Canadian International Development Agency and by Danish engineering firm Ramboll who carried out the original feasibility report on the port’s construction (Bräutigam and Rathmire, 2021). As such, what is apparent is that there are certain misconceptions, myths, and at the very least inaccurate journalism surrounding debt-trap diplomacy by China (Jones and Hameiri, 2020), (Singh, 2020), (Bräutigam, 2020), (Bräutigam, 2021). Even more recently there have been reports that the collateral for Belt and Road Initiative investment in Kenya is in the form of waived sovereignty rights to Mombasa Port which is examined in greater detail later in this research. These are very much unconfirmed reports, yet many media sources have decided to run with the story and ultimately contribute to creating a negative frame of Chinese investment, insisting that Chinese development is an attempt to debt trap and take the port (Umeh, 2021), (Odhiambo, 2021). The issue of debt trapping is widely debunked by scholars (Jones and Hameiri, 2020, Singh, 2020, Jiang and Shaomin 2020, Carmody, 2020), yet the issue of debt does exist as a part of development. The UK for example is owed £861 million in debt from Sudan (Busby, 2021). What’s most shocking about this is the fact that nearly 4/5ths or £684 million of this debt is from interest accrued on this loan (Busby, 2021). Unlike the case of Sudan, in Sri Lanka tangible infrastructure was built by the money which China loaned the state, in Sudan, it is just a case of profiting from interests on the loans and could be far more akin to usury. Once more the false equivalencies that one can draw from framing Chinese development as nefarious while failing to examine Western development in the UK media to any critical level are disappointing and highlight the aforementioned framing biases.

Chinese and Western development strategies have both their commonalities and differences. Chinese development tends to target large-scale infrastructural projects such as infrastructure to help oil extraction in Angola, to the Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya to Djibouti port. According to the China Africa Research Institute (2022), between 2000-2020 \$160 billion of investment has been committed by China to the African continent to a variety of projects among varying sectors. Of this \$160 billion \$46.8 went towards transport infrastructure, \$40.5 billion went to power infrastructure, and \$18 billion went to mining infrastructure which makes up the three largest sectors of investments. In comparison, UKAid does not

even list these sectors as part of their development strategies and instead focuses on more abstract goals such as conflict resolution, women's empowerment and livelihoods (UKAid, 2022). The UN reflect a similar stance when it comes to development. Projects tend to aim to accomplish the UN Sustainable Development Goals and their aims for a more sustainable, peaceful, and poverty-free future (UN, 2022). Though UKAid, the UN and other Western sources of development have aims which should improve the quality of life for those in Africa and lift people out of poverty the approach is still subject to criticism. Half of all international aid is tied meaning that the money which is given to developing states is ringfenced so that it can only be spent on goods and services from the donor state (Malik, 2018). Malik further highlights issues regarding the narrative around Western aid, with USAid previously bragging "The principal beneficiary of America's foreign assistance programmes has always been the United States. Close to 80% of the US Agency for International Development's contracts and grants go directly to American firms." (Malik, 2018). This quote was removed from the USAid website in 2006 according to Malik (2018), but it does highlight that ultimately Western aid and perhaps all aid must benefit the donor state too. China is no different in that there must be positive externalities or a return on its investment, but perhaps there is a difference in how Chinese development is portrayed. For example, in Chinese state-to-state infrastructure agreements for development, the money never leaves Chinese control as they implement the projects themselves (Davies, Martyn et al, 2008). This funding by aid in kind rather than cash takes away some of the risks of corruption or misappropriation of funds ((Davies, Martyn et al, 2008). It also allows China to have greater control of how the funds are spent which can be seen as a positive for regulation and oversight of this development which is done in consultation with the recipient states. The downside to this is that it takes away some of the agency of the recipient states and potentially provides a paternalistic means of development with China having overall control.

### 3. Colonialism failed development and NGOs

African history since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been defined by the ending of the colonial empires seen across the continent (Manji and O'Coill, 2002). Development has simply failed within the colonial period with for example per-capita income in Sub-Saharan Africa dropping by 21% between 1981 and 1989 (Manji and O'Coill, 2002). Nearly one-

quarter of the globe's population in 2002 lived on less than \$1 a day but a shocking 42% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa lived on less than one dollar per day (Manji and O'Coill). The failings of this colonial period and the resulting poverty have led to the rise of a new industry, aid (Manji and O'Coill, 2002). NGOs as a result have become an integral part of what Manji and O'Coill refer to as the "development machine (2002). Unfortunately, despite what is framed as a benign and altruistic act by NGOs in Africa, the authors argue it reinforces the paternalistic relations between Africans and Western institutions which previously existed in the form of colonialism (Manji and O'Coill, 2002). To surmise this idea the authors state: "Today their [NGOs] work contributes marginally to the relief of poverty, but significantly to undermining the struggle of African people to emancipate themselves from economic, social and political oppression". Manji and O'Coill (2002) emphasize the change from NGOs with colonial ties pivoting to remove these ties and appearing to be indigenous and free from the racial prejudices which were previously noted. This change of course was more of a marketing ploy and instead of the use of racist terms describing Africa as "uncivilized", the term "underdeveloped" emerged (Manji and O'Coill, 2002). A certain sense of romanticism evolved surrounding these NGOs as they then aimed to bring development to these newly liberated states, all unfortunately from a Western frame with discourse and vocabulary defining non-Western people through a Western lens and failing to acknowledge a divergence between cultures (Manji and O'Coill, 2002).

#### 4. China's Challenge to development hegemony

Examining why the West may have this bias towards Chinese development projects in Africa is also core to understanding the framing of Chinese development in Africa. Gilpin (2021), highlights the threat that China poses to disrupting the Neoliberal World Order (NLWO). The global South Gilpin argues is controlled by the development trajectories that the West sets out for it, which is understandable, from a Western perspective, to reflect Western interests. Sino-African relations pose an alternative to this NLWO and Chinese aid and investment allow for a decoupling between Africa and the West (Gilpin, 2021). This decoupling challenges traditional neo-liberal economic development, and if harnessed correctly by African leaders could provide the framework for long-term sustainable, Afro-centric development. This reduction in the power of traditional Western donor states, combined with aid with reduced

conditionalities gives an opportunity for development which is targeted and controlled by African states themselves to give effective agency. On the other hand, Chinese development could become a new repeat of a hegemonic development paradigm and continue to undermine African agency.

## 5. Media Bias of African Development

Reading about China and particularly their involvement in Africa, there is often negative framing of China presented in Western reporting. Hewitt (2011), examines the international media coverage of China in a comprehensive study which highlights the perceptions and challenges for foreign journalists. For the most part, the study finds that journalistic integrity remains, and anecdotally the journalist's involvement in the study actively challenges their preconceived notions and biases to ensure accurate reporting (Hewitt, 2011). It was noted, however, that some journalists felt there was a desire for greater coverage of negative news stories regarding China. These negative stories were perceived as more desirable by news editors in the West as they favoured the narratives of the media outlets (Hewitt, 2011). Several of the journalists also in their experience had suggested concern that editors tended to over-emphasize and perhaps focus on certain types of stories particularly ones which highlighted human rights violations (Hewitt, 2011). One of the journalists suggested that part of the issue was not just that they were producing a large volume of articles regarding these negative situations but also that they would send out alerts for these stories to the public (Hewitt, 2011). One of the journalists suggests that the coverage of China in Western media is often an example of "echo-chamber journalism" (Hewitt, 2011). Alcott and Gentzkow (2017), emphasize the development of partisan media and how media consumers consume media which reflects their opinions and ideology. In essence, this means that media consumers engage with the media they want to and in return media sources and the print media produce content which engages with these opinions and ideologies of their readership. Hewitt (2011), ultimately concludes that there is some cause for concern that there is an anti-China bias in Western media, but also that by enshrouding the media in secrecy and censorship the Chinese government essentially facilitates the creation of this bias.

## 6. Chinese Development in Africa

Chinese development in Africa is often portrayed as a monolithic or homogenous state-run project of development. Contrary to this basic portrayal Chinese development is far more heterogenous than is commonly portrayed (Gu, Zhang, Vaz and Mukwereza, 2016). Chinese development in Africa and the involvement of the state within businesses are influenced by a wide variety of financial, political, commercial and diplomatic factors (Gu et al, 2016). There are also variations of these businesses and their operations in Africa from state-owned enterprises to entirely privately owned Chinese businesses operating in Africa (Gu et al, 2016). As such Gu et al (2016) dispel the myth that there is just one form of Chinese “state capitalism”, but rather that it is a diverse form of development with many actors, many interests and many different factors at play which influence the direction of development. Their study evaluates the supposed state control over Chinese businesses in Africa and concludes that the state in fact has very little influence or control over these enterprises (Gu et al, 2016). Instead of the state influence, they find that Chinese enterprises whether state-owned or otherwise stem primarily from the commercial interests of that enterprise rather than from the Chinese state or provincial governments. As such this narrative of Chinese state control over businesses directly is both misleading and incorrect. This is not to say the Chinese government does not have influence over Chinese businesses in Africa but rather that their influence and involvement are overstated by the media. In Zimbabwe Gu et al (2016) highlight the importance of Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centres which act as centres to support technological agricultural development in Africa for example. Though these centres are funded by the Chinese government they are operated by Chinese businesses in their respective regions which ultimately influence the development in these regions (Gu, et al, 2016). As such Chinese development does not have this one concerted influence from the Chinese state but is made up of a litany of actors creating a heterogenous approach to development contrary to how it is often portrayed.

Taylor (2009) provides an insight into the misrepresentation of China’s involvement in Africa. Taylor (2009) notes tendencies to refer to China as an encompassing exploitative state-operated business he calls “China Inc.” and its associated “imperialism”. This point is exemplified by Taylor's comments: *“The idea that Beijing is a new “colonizing” power, exploiting Africa’s natural resources, flooding the continent with low-priced manufactured products while turning a blind eye to Africa’s autocrats is at the core of most critiques of China’s current engagement with Africa “.* Despite these arguments which are heard from Western and African, politicians and media there is an overarching flaw with this notion

according to Taylor (2009). Despite the huge and growing impact of China in Africa, the lack of an overarching development strategy operated in Beijing on behalf of the Chinese government does not exist in the same way by which colonial powers in Africa previously enacted driven, sweeping and all-encompassing policies to exploit Africa (Taylor, 2009). What is seen is a false equivalency taking Chinese development in Africa at its worst and almost being blinded or ignorant to how encompassing, extractive, and controlling colonialism in Africa was. Chinese development in Africa has been subjected to much criticism as a part of the “yellow peril” campaign which aims to frame Chinese involvement in Africa as an attempt to literally or figuratively take over Africa (Taylor, 2009). Taylor (2009) reiterates the point that this narrative labels China as a single unitary actor which aims to conquer Africa and can turn on or off the tap when it comes to involvement in Africa. However, this is wide of the mark.

Bräutigam (2011), provides a comprehensive and encompassing study of Sino-African relations and China’s involvement in Africa. The book almost serves as a rebuttal to perceptions of China as a rogue donor in Africa and aims to dispel myths of nefarious neo-colonial Chinese interests in Africa. China’s foreign policy framework first established in the 1950s has the strict principle of “non-interference in internal affairs” (Bräutigam, 2011). This essentially has resulted in Africa receiving what some consider to be “no strings attached” aid, contrary to Western aid which often put stipulations such as democratic good governance on states in return for aid. This form of aid prevents a “paternalistic” relationship between the donor state and the recipients with the Ugandan president stating: “I have a real problem with this paternalistic relationship of the so-called ‘donor’ and ‘beggar’ relationship” (Bräutigam, 2011). Gilpin (2021), echoes this notion arguing that Chinese aid in Africa allows for greater self-determination for African states and allows for these states to have greater control over their development trajectories. When looking at the abject failings of World Bank structural adjustment programmes and the conditionalities it brought along with them (Dollar and Svensson, 1998) (Killick, 1997), it is clear to see why Gilpin (2021) and Bräutigam (2011) hold Chinese aid in high esteem as it gives agency to African states to seek a form of development which is an alternative to Western partners development.

Criticisms of Chinese aid in the Western media are widely distributed but ultimately often the criticisms are easily refuted. A common call from the West suggests that Chinese investment

undermines African democracy. Bräutigam (2011), finds that China's stance on democracy is one of indifference to democracy rather than undermining democracy, and as such Chinese influence in Africa does not have a significant effect on causing democratic back-sliding. Afro-Barometer (Logan & Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny, 2021) provides empirical evidence which echoes this notion, showing that African's commitment to democracy is not influenced by attitudes towards China. There is a lack of statistically significant evidence which suggests China is damaging African democracy, and even in the case of Burma in 2007 Beijing sent an envoy to encourage a rapid move towards democracy (Bräutigam, 2011). Though this case in Burma does not represent African development it does represent China's development policies more broadly. It's clear that China's policy is from this evidence, focused on development and stability rather than a Cold War-style ideological battle.

Importantly data from Afrobarometer (Lekorwe, Chingwete, Okuru, & Samson, 2016) highlights that Chinese development projects are broadly supported in Africa. In their study of 36 countries, Afrobarometer (Lekorwe, Chingwete, Okuru, & Samson, 2016) find that 63% of Africans in the study noted "that China is a "somewhat" or "very" positive influence in their country". This study captures a snapshot of how China is perceived in Africa and as such does not capture individual experiences of China in Africa but a general image. Despite many warranted critiques of Chinese development, the overall perception of Chinese development appears to be positive given this study. Outlining some of these traditional failings of development has led to Western aid coming in a different form than had been seen in the past. What one can observe now are clear differences between Chinese development in Africa and Western development policy in Africa (Condon, 2012). China, unlike their Western counterparts, tends to invest heavily in infrastructure (Condon, 2012). This has led to some huge infrastructural projects such as the SGR, in 35 African countries (IDE-JETRO, 2022).

China is also critiqued often by Western media sources as being extractive with their aid targeting natural resources. Angola is the single largest recipient of Chinese loan money in Africa amounting to \$42.6 billion since 2000 (CARI, 2021). Angola has also long been a recipient of Western development loans particularly since the end of the civil war which tore up the country's infrastructure in 2002 (Bräutigam, 2011). Chinese loans provide a needed alternative to Western loans which were previously given by Paris Agreement members and

were relatively expensive (Bräutigam, 2011). China has offered loans with 1.5% interest instead of the 2.5% interest Western states had previously demanded (Bräutigam, 2011), so understandably Angola has taken China up on their cheaper offer. This loan money has been used exclusively for infrastructural development, which is what has been desperately needed in a state which has had roads, sanitation and bridges destroyed by conflict (Bräutigam, 2011). Rather than these oil-backed loans being extractive of Angola's oil, it has instead facilitated Angola to pay back their expensive Paris Club loans with oil revenue which has been garnered from the investment in infrastructure from China (Bräutigam, 2011). As such the rhetoric regarding China's rogue donor status in this instance is not just unfair, but they also pose as a more viable partner in development than the previous Western investors. Bräutigam (2011), makes apparent that despite obvious critiques which can be drawn regarding development policy China is certainly not worse and is potentially better for African development than the West has been when looking at lifting people out of poverty and creating infrastructure which ultimately leads to economic growth.

Corkin (2011) however, notes that these loans have not been without their flaws and describes the use of these funds as Angolan elites exploiting Chinese credit lines to further their own wealth or political interests. This relationship of convenience with China targeting oil and their ability to provide credit lines leads to a degree of debate regarding the development benefits in this regard. Ovadia (2013) surmises this point with their reflection that this Chinese "resource imperialism" is similar to previous euro-Western imperialism regarding resources, except that China sets up Angola on a trajectory of economic growth and improvement of the quality of everyday life where Western development has not. By all means, this is not an ideal form of development, but it is a more favourable alternative form of development which China provides and it is clear to understand why African states would engage with it.

Another bone of contention regarding Chinese development which provides infrastructure in return for access to resources is the fact that these deals have fixed prices for the resources and these deals can stretch over decades (Alves, 2013). China provides concessional loans which are below the rate of benchmark of the rates generally charged by the Peoples Bank of China and are subsidized by the central government (Alves, 2013). These loans then must be paid back over 15-20 years which includes a 5-7-year grace period (Alves, 2013). Alves notes that there is still debate as to how effective these deals are for African development and also notes the external effects which result. On one hand, the infrastructure she argues has

had huge effects lifting people out of poverty and improving the quality of life of Africans in regions where this infrastructure is located (Alves, 2013). On the other hand, the long-term effects of these deals may offset the short-term infrastructural gains when the “terms of labour practices, local content, governance, debt sustainability and environmental impact” are examined (Alves, 2013). Alves (2013) does point out that with many of the issues of these Chinese deals the responsibility lies on the African states and ultimately agency must be placed on the leaders in the states themselves. With weakened state structures and a lack of institutional strength in many African states, however, combatting these negative external effects is a task that is much easier said than done (Alves, 2013). Despite the development trajectory discussed, the war in Ukraine provides an example which has drastically increased global fuel prices and highlights the disadvantage of having these fixed price resource for infrastructure deals for African states. It is easy to argue this, but also if fuel prices had dropped for another reason, it could be very advantageous for African regions to have fixed prices guaranteeing their infrastructure projects.

“In the last 60 years, no country has made as big an impact on the political, economic and social fabric of Africa as China has since the turn of the millennium” (Moyo, 2009). Moyo provides an African scholarly perspective of how locals view Chinese development and ultimately how effective Chinese development is in Africa. Moyo (2009) provides evidence outlining China’s role as a partner in what she argues is a mutually beneficial partnership, and also notes the hypocrisy of Western states being scornful of Chinese development (which was evident in the news sources later evaluated). Moyo (2009) argues that the Western liberal consensus sees Africa as their responsibility in a paternalistic fashion. Seeing the damage that Western states have caused Africa by supporting rogue dictators such as Mobutu, Amin, and Bokassa, it is clear that Africans have a right to scoff at the Western criticisms of Chinese development (Moyo, 2009). What is key to point out here is that of course, Chinese development is not perfect, but it does pose itself as a worthy alternative when considering previous western development attempts. Critiques of Chinese development and investments as extractive are valid but overstated. Of course, China expects benefits on the back of their development efforts which come in the form of oil, gold, copper, cobalt or any other raw materials, but Moyo (2009) pulls no punches when she states that “to say the average African is not benefiting at all is a falsehood, and the critics know it”. Incorporating Moyo’s findings and views into this paper is paramount as she represents an African perspective and ultimately does not approach development from a paternalistic view. Despite her vocal

support for Chinese investment in Africa even going as far as to refer to China as “our friends”, she remains critical of Chinese development and despite its success, Chinese development still must be subjected to fair criticism, unlike what is sometimes purported by western detractors. It is important to note that Moyo does not speak on behalf of all Africans, but she certainly provides a perspective which often is absent from Western academia and advantageous to understanding the nuances of development in Africa.

## 7. Chinese vs Western development.

Fukuyama (2016) summarises the difference in development models adopted by China and the USA. One of the primary differences Fukuyama espouses is the infrastructural approach that China takes, with a “built it and they will come” approach to development (Fukuyama, 2016). Fukuyama (2016) argues that the Western development model has prioritised “large investments in public health, women’s empowerment, support for global civil society, and anti-corruption measures” but without core infrastructure, these projects ultimately struggle, and their impact is stifled. Investment in public health for example is worthless if there is no reliable access to power, clean water, or even roads to get people to hospitals (Fukuyama, 2016). This type of development appears to be beneficial on paper but without the basic infrastructure required Fukuyama argues its effect is not maximised. Investing in roads, ports, airports, electricity and railways hopes to bring about a more deliberate form of “big D Development”. At the same time, this deliberate development strategy also brings about positive spinoff effects which can stimulate development via immanent development.

Fukuyama (2016) surmises three reasons which give China a comparative advantage over Western states when examining development. Firstly, China as an authoritarian regime does not have to go through the same consultative process that Western development needs to (Fukuyama, 2016). Authoritarianism allows for a streamlined decision-making process which then aligns with the national interest and can enact development policy or construction rapidly (Fukuyama, 2016). This essentially cuts through the bureaucratic red tape which inhibits the decision-making processes in democracies. The second factor Fukuyama notes is that geopolitical positioning is a driver for these goals and as such the geopolitical gain which can be seized from these projects weighs heavily in decisions to develop a region or area (Fukuyama, 2016). The third reason for China’s comparative advantage in rolling out

development plans is the need within Chinese domestic industrial policy to keep spending in order to stimulate industry and keep Chinese citizens employed (Fukuyama, 2016).

## 8. African Perspectives

Examining Sino-African relations from an African perspective is core to this research to avoid what could be perceived as a personal inherent Western bias. Sautman and Hairong (2009), provide the first random sample survey of African views of “Afro-China links”. Their study had 250 respondents from 9 African countries, surveying a variety of undergraduate postgraduate and faculty at leading universities in these countries (Sautman and Hairong, 2009). A regression analysis was then utilised to identify the most prominent factors which influenced how China was viewed (Sautman and Hairong, 2009). The most important finding of the authors in the context of this research is that African views of China are not nearly as negative as the Western media portrays them to be (Sautman and Hairong, 2009). They also acknowledge that Western media sources are often based upon anecdotal evidence which can be hyperbolic and inaccurate (Sautman and Hairong, 2009). The two primary variables which influence African perceptions of China noted by the authors are the degree to which African politicians in a state have brought up “the China Problem” and the degree to which Western media infiltrates the state (Sautman and Hairong, 2009). As such, the huge contribution that Western media has in tainting Chinese involvement in Africa which can be applicable in the case of Chinese development projects can be identified. One strength of this study which contributes to this topic is that the survey focuses on university students and their perspectives on China in Africa (Sautman and Hairong, 2009). As such it takes the sample from an educated group who perhaps are more familiar with the issues and nuances of Chinese involvement in Africa and provides a critiqued and informed perspective, rather than one which has been subjected to influence.

## 9. Case study Standard Gauge Railway Kenya.

The construction of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) in Kenya provides a contentious project under the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative which has gained much media attention and has been subjected to both praise and criticism by media around the world. The SGR is

an ambitious train line which links Kenya's capital and most populous city Nairobi, to Kenya's second most populous city Mombasa. The train line cuts down travel time from Nairobi to Mombasa from over 10 hours to 4 for passengers and allows freight to be transported in about 8 hours (Taylor, 2020). The construction for the first phase of this project connecting Nairobi to Mombasa was commenced in 2014 before being finished in 2017 (Taylor, 2020). Despite connecting two major cities with highspeed rail infrastructure the SGR has been subjected to both some fair criticisms and some hyperbolic accusations which have not materialised yet and have been prevalently reported in the media.

The construction of this rail line contributes to the infrastructure of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which connects 87 countries, has cost over \$1 trillion and connects around 4.4 billion people (Taylor, 2020). This portion of the BRI makes up part of China's maritime "Silk Route" and hopes to give China, Kenya and Africa more access to trade via Mombasa port (Taylor, 2020). Despite the demand for this infrastructure, the feasibility studies for this project showed that if the project was to be viable a total weight of 55.2 million tons would need to be transported by the SGR annually yet demand only necessitated an expected 14.4 million tons per annum (Taylor, 2020). A second feasibility report was then carried out by the China Road and Bridge Corporation and found the project would be highly profitable contrary to previous reports (Taylor, 2020). In 2014 a \$3.8 billion loan was granted by Chinese Exim bank to fund the construction of the SGR, with Kenya taking on a large amount of debt as a result (Taylor, 2020). The construction of the project was also strewn with controversy and issues. \$20 million worth of cranes brought in for the project for example were abandoned as they malfunctioned displaying the lack of frugality of the project (Taylor, 2020).

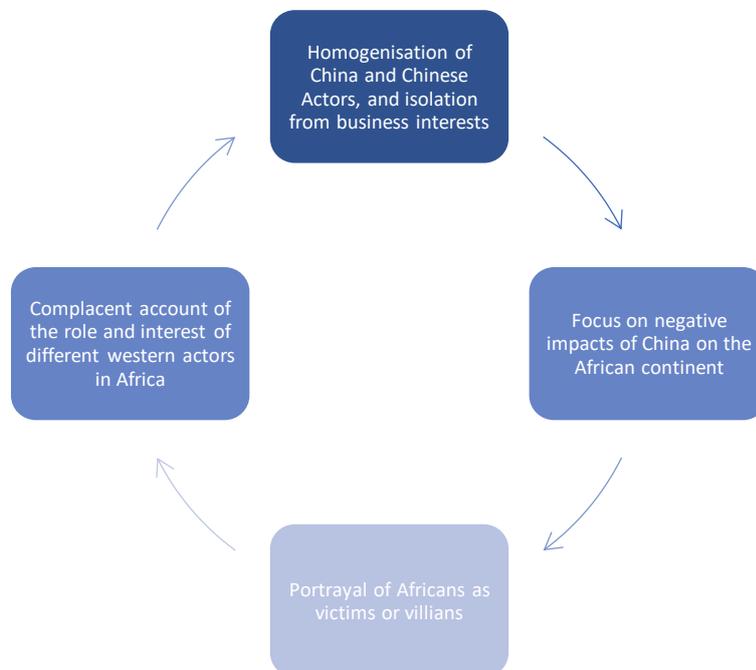
Since its construction, the SGR has still been operating at a loss (Taylor, 2020). Furthermore, the SGR has been subjected to criticisms about inflated costs, land confiscation, local procurement, and labour tensions (Wang and Wissenbach, 2019). The clientelistic nature of Kenyan politics has also meant that the project's inflated costs were a result of subcontracting by elites using their position or power for personal gain (Wang and Wissenbach, 2019). Wang and Wissenbach find that China's involvement in this clientelism is very limited, but it does draw light on the issues of agency in African development and makes one question the best means for delivering on development whilst respecting African interests and involvement. A 21Ksh billion (~\$180 million) operating loss in the first three years of the SGR's running highlights the issue not only with the debt accrued from the construction

(Mutua, 2020) but also with the continued losses and the impact that they will have on Kenyan debt.

Even more recently the SGR has found itself thrust into the negative limelight once more. Kenyan media outlets have reported that a leaked document shows Mombasa port as collateral for the loan taken on to build the SGR. These unconfirmed reports have stoked fears in Kenya that a similar situation to that of Hambantota port in Sri Lanka may accrue where China gained control of the port in return for debt reprieve which has been framed by media outlets as an infringement on Sri-Lankan sovereignty. If China were to gain access to the port or seize it as some argue it would show the unsustainability of Chinese development in Kenya and would also reflect very poorly on Chinese development as a whole strengthening the argument of those who describe Chinese development as “debt-trap diplomacy”. Ultimately these reports are unsubstantiated, yet they are still visible in the media, granted to a primarily Kenyan audience, and highlight the willingness of media outlets to write sensationalist stories which paint Chinese development in a negative light. The parallels are drawn between the SGR’s unsustainable debt and Hambantota port as this poses itself as the worst-case scenario for an African state caught in the snares of debt-trap diplomacy.

Zambia has recently defaulted on its debt obligations with China and Europe and once more fears have been stoked that this could lead to China taking control of Lusaka airport, taking over Zambia’s national power company ZESCO or taking over mines in lieu of this debt (Bräutigam, 2021). Once more Bräutigam highlights that this is hyperbolic that this debt trap diplomacy will take place. What it does point out is China’s unsustainable investments in Zambia, China’s lack of coordination between different investments in Zambia, and now it highlights China’s inexperience with dealing with this issues of debt (Bräutigam, 2021). Bräutigam further emphasizes that this is not a problem China has created but a problem that China has facilitated which has ultimately been created by Zambian politicians who have created what Bräutigam considers to be a “creditor trap” which will leave China having to foot the bill for this large portion of debt and will lead to China ultimately cancelling much of the debt she hypothesizes (Bräutigam, 2021). This notion highlights the need to put the agency on African elites and leaders who in absence of the controls and constraints of effective institutions can act with impunity and make decisions which are not in the national interest.

Undoubtedly the SGR which has been dubbed the “Lunatic Line” has been to this point a huge failure contributing hugely to the growth of Kenyan debt to China from \$756 million in 2014 to \$6.47 billion in 2019, creating a rail line which has not been expanded or completed in areas as was planned also (Carmody, Taylor, and Zajontz, 2022). This accrument of debt should not be understated, and it has likely left Kenya in a position in which they will be unable to repay their debts unless they are granted a large debt reprieve (Carmody et al, 2022). Despite this Carmody (2019) creates an important distinction between debt trap diplomacy which is consistently emphasized by the media and “intensified relations of dependence” that China creates with Africa. Carmody (2019) argues that by virtue of the debt accrual not being deliberate but as a consequence of poor practice this does not constitute the nefarious debt trapping which is so prevalent in the media. Debt trap diplomacy and these fears of infringing Kenyan sovereignty being impinged upon are largely overstated, yet Kenyans, the media, academics, and development experts are correct to be very concerned about the large portions of unsustainable debt that Kenya has accumulated. Rather than using the “meme” of debt trap diplomacy (Bräutigam, 2011) (Carmody, 2019), it would be more accurate to highlight this nuance, but that is admittedly unlikely to occur in the media today.



*Fig 3.1 Mawdsley's Themes of Chinese media framing in British media*



*Fig 3.2 Framework demonstrates the course that Chinese development goes through which ultimately leads to gatekeeping of development paradigms.*

## IV. Methodology

### 1. Overview

This research paper utilises a textual content analysis of 7 British media broadsheet news sources to determine the framing of Chinese development in Africa. The newspapers which were examined are The Financial Times, The Guardian (and Weekly Guardian), The Independent, The Observer, The Telegraph and The Times (and Times on Sunday) and The Economist. Picking the same 6 newspapers that Mawdsley (2008) uses in her study and the Economist will allow for a frame of reference to establish what media portrayal of China in Africa has been before when her study was carried out in 2008, and what it appears like currently, and if there are any commonalities or differences.

The sample utilised for this study took 20 newspaper articles from each of the sources between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 and 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022. This period was selected as it avoids overlap with the time period of Mawdsley's study and thus differentiates and builds on her work as a basis. Examining this 13-year time period is extensively longer than Mawdsley's 6-year period so a more generalised picture of Chinese development in Africa and its portrayal can be constructed, yet nonetheless, defining moments or periods can still be recognised from the analysis. The selection of these 7 broadsheet newspapers is due to their positions as the newspapers with the greatest readership. Broadsheet newspapers were selected for this study due to their tendency to be more rationalist in their coverage compared to more sensationalist tabloid media (Connell, 2014). The broadsheets as such should have a more accurate coverage of a topic such as Chinese development in Africa which should lead to less sensationalism and less polarisation in the media than their tabloid counterparts. Tabloid news sources tend to create a narrativizing discourse which is not reflective of accurate media coverage and inhibits readers from being able to draw accurate conclusions (Connell, 2014). Examining broadsheet media is also conducive to these studies as Wing Chan and Goldthorpe (2007) note broadsheet newspapers have a readership which is made up primarily of higher class and higher social status individuals. These higher-class individuals like politicians are ultimately the individuals who contribute to the dialogue surrounding development and have the potential to influence development paradigms, compounding the importance of broadsheet media coverage.

The articles were obtained via Lexis-Nexus which allowed sources to be examined with a number of search parameters, segregating the articles by date and source. The terms “China”, “Africa”, “Investment” and “Development” were also used to stratify the search and ensure the relevance of the articles to Chinese development in Africa. The accuracy of this search was strong yet there were articles which used the search terms and yet were not strictly relevant to Chinese development in Africa.

## 2. Quantitative analysis

A codebook was constructed to enable a quantitative examination of the 7 media sources. Preselected deductive codes were initially utilised in a preliminary analysis. These codes were obtained from the literature regarding Chinese development in Africa. These codes from the literature represent a critical and academic perspective. These critical and academic codes are essential to understanding how the news sources engage with the topics and ultimately how their coverage compares to that of academic writing which engages with development theory and development paradigms. After the preliminary analysis, there were also inductive codes which were obtained from examining the media sources themselves. These codes emerged as common themes or frames from the sources which were not anticipated to be included in the articles. Primarily these were frames which were known but not expected to be found in these news sources as they were more sensationalist tabloid-style frames. Nonetheless, their inclusion is important as it highlights how this topic of Chinese development in Africa has been depicted.

## Codebook

### Positive Codes

- Economic
  - General
    - A general positive economic frame of Chinese development in Africa is observed in the article.
  - Interest rates
    - Poses low Chinese interest rates on loans as a positive aspect of Chinese development in Africa.
  - Economic Growth
    - Poses economic growth as a result of Chinese development as a positive aspect of Chinese development in Africa.
- Employment
  - General
    - Poses a general positive view of job creation or employment as a positive aspect of Chinese development.
  - Local Jobs
    - Poses Chinese creation of local jobs as a positive aspect of Chinese development in Africa.
- Environmental
  - General
    - Poses Chinese development as having a positive effect on environmental or climate-related issues
  - Emissions
    - Poses Chinese development as a positive in the reduction of emissions or as a positive for developing green energy
  - Environmental degradation
    - Poses Chinese development as a form of development which does not cause environmental degradation or causes less environmental degradation than alternative development sources.
- Livelihoods
  - Improvement in quality of life

- Poses Chinese development as a positive that improved or will improve the quality of life for populations.
- Positive social effects
  - Poses Chinese development in Africa as a source of positive social effects on a population.
- Geopolitical
  - Chinese development alternative
    - Poses Chinese development as a positive alternative to other development sources.
  - Supportive of the Chinese government
    - Article exhibits support for the Chinese government.
- Development
  - Support of Infrastructural development
    - The article poses Chinese infrastructural development in Africa as a positive aspect of Chinese development.
  - General support of Chinese development policy.
    - The article poses Chinese development policy in Africa as a positive for African development.
  - High-quality development
    - The article poses physical the quality of Chinese development as a positive of Chinese development in Africa (ie. Road quality infrastructure quality)
- Local View
  - Positive local view
    - The article highlights positive local perspectives of Chinese development in Africa. This can be both community-level positive views, but also includes a positive endorsement from politicians and elites.
- Mutual benefit
  - The article poses Chinese development in Africa as mutually beneficial for both Chinese and African interests.
- Conditionality

- The article poses the lack of conditionality imposed by Chinese development as a positive aspect of Chinese development in Africa.

### Negative codes

#### - Economic

- General
  - The article poses general economic criticisms of Chinese development in Africa
- Economic viability
  - The article poses criticisms of the economic viability of Chinese development in Africa.
- Debt
  - The article poses debt taken on by African states for Chinese development as a negative aspect of Chinese development.
- Critique of economic growth or lack of it
  - The article critiques the growth or the lack of it which occurs as a result of Chinese development.

#### - Employment

- General
  - The article highlights generally negative aspects surrounding employment and labour as a result of Chinese development in Africa.
- Lack of local jobs or abundance of external labour
  - The article highlights a lack of local jobs created by Chinese development in Africa or an abundance of jobs created for Chinese or external workers rather than local populations.

#### - Environmental

- Deforestation
  - The article highlights Chinese development's negative effects on deforestation in Africa.
- Higher emissions

- The article poses Chinese development in negative regard increasing emissions.
- Environmental degradation
  - The article poses Chinese development in negative regard due to resulting environmental degradation.
- General
  - The article poses general environmental criticisms or concerns as a result of Chinese development.
- **Livelihoods**
  - Negative effects on quality of life
    - The article highlights negative effects on quality of life as a consequence of Chinese development in Africa.
  - Negative social effects
    - The article highlights negative social effects as a consequence of Chinese development in Africa.
- **Geopolitical**
  - Poses China as a nefarious geopolitical actor
    - The article poses China as a nefarious or ill-intentioned geopolitical actor in Africa.
  - Critical of the Chinese government
    - The article is critical of the Chinese government.
- **Development**
  - Critical of infrastructural approach to development.
    - The article is critical of the Chinese approach to infrastructural development.
  - Lack of conditionality
    - The article is critical of the lack of conditionalities imposed by Chinese development policy.
  - General criticism of Chinese development policy
    - The article provides general criticism or disapproval of Chinese development policy in Africa.
- **Extractive**
  - The article poses Chinese development as extractive.
- **Negative Local View**

- Article highlights local (African's) negative view of Chinese development.
- **Neo-Colonialism**
  - The article frames Chinese development in Africa as neo-colonial.
- **Human Rights**
  - The article is critical of Chinese development in Africa because of human rights concerns or abuses.
- **Democracy (and associated)**
  - The article is critical of Chinese development in Africa and the potential lack of democratic values, contribution to the erosion of democracy or incompatibilities with democracy.

### Neutral Codes

- **Chinese investment in energy**
  - The article highlights Chinese investment in energy in Africa.
- **Chinese investment in manufacturing**
  - The article highlights Chinese investment in manufacturing in Africa.
- **Chinese investment in telecommunications**
  - The article highlights Chinese investment in telecommunications in Africa.
- **Chinese infrastructural investment**
  - The article highlights Chinese investment in infrastructure in Africa.
- **Critically engaged debate surrounding Chinese development**
  - The article critically engaged with topics of debate surrounding Chinese development in Africa. Both positive and negative perspectives of Chinese development in Africa needed to be displayed for this code to ensure critical engagement and limited bias.

### 3. Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis was conducted simultaneously as the quantitative codes were being identified in the articles. It involved the reading and interpretation of each of the individual articles and understanding the sentiments being evoked by the article. Where there were examples of excellent critical engagement or insight, sensationalist coverage, or coverage which contributed to the research question of understanding how Chinese development in Africa is portrayed in the British media quotes were taken to exemplify these frames. Collating this information and noting patterns among the newspapers allowed for a broad understanding of the British media sphere and the individual newspapers to be obtained. Examining the news sources in this fashion allowed for data to be obtained which would otherwise be unobtainable from the quantitative content analysis. As a further part of this content analysis the timeframes of articles were noted and also the journalists of the articles were examined to note the influence of time periods and the events in them and the expertise of the journalists. Forum on China-Africa Co-operation, Chinese state visits, Covid-19, Brexit, and also decrease in commodity prices around 2016, emerged as some of the time periods where coverage was influenced by these events.

#### 4. Interviews

Interviews were carried out as a part of this study in order to gain the perspective of the journalists writing the pieces and ultimately come to an understanding of why the media coverage is the way it is. Gaining this insight gives an understanding of the potential influences, biases and competencies of the journalists which ultimately influence the content which is consumed by the readers. The interviews were formal in structure with both of the interviewees receiving the same questions in the same format. The questions were decided upon to maximise contribution to the research questions and contribute to the broader picture of the topic of study. The sub-components under some questions were included to potentially probe the interviewee if their input was limited. Fortunately, in the interviews conducted these probes to engage the journalists were not necessary and the input from the journalists alone proved to be of relevance to the study. Furthermore, despite the formal nature of the interview, the conversations with the journalists were frank and honest. This frankness and honesty meant the journalists were very critical and analytical when interviewed and were very comfortable talking with confidence.

The journalists were all individuals who had written for the 7 newspapers being examined and who were identified through the articles they had written which were included in the study period and the study via the Lexis-Nexus search. They were approached randomly and as such a variation in the journalist's newspapers was provided. The journalists were currently based on three continents. They had a variety of roles from free-lance journalists, to correspondents to editors and each specialised in different topics. The journalists were contacted via email where their email was available, via their website answering system where applicable, and even then, some journalists were contacted by direct message on Twitter. Some journalists replied to the requests to interview but felt their knowledge of the topic of African development was not strong enough and did not want to be interviewed. This was disappointing as the journalists contacted were all involved in writing about African development in some fashion or other, and it was hoped interviews could be taken with all journalists contributing to development coverage, not just those who are confident enough to engage in an interview. The variety in these individuals' roles and perspectives provides an albeit small but a representative depiction of those who are creating the narratives surrounding Chinese development in Africa in the British media.

The interviews were conducted over Zoom calls as the journalists were based in the UK, China or US. The calls were recorded, downloaded, and transcribed using Otter AI. The transcription was mostly accurate, it was, however, listened to again and the transcription was edited to ensure the accuracy of what the interviewee had said. Once the transcription was completed the transcript was then analysed and the same codes which are used in the content analysis were used qualitatively to gauge the opinions of the interviewees. Different themes were observed highlighting some differences between the content analysis of what the authors produced in a professional capacity and what their sentiments were.

## Interview

### Introductory Questions

1. Can you tell me something about yourself and what is your role or experience in journalism?
2. Why did you become interested in writing about African development, and how often do you write about development?

### Chinese development questions

3. How would you describe the key features of Chinese development in Africa?
4. Why do you think African states are taking on Chinese development in such volumes?
5. How would you critically compare Chinese and Western development?
  - a. Are they perhaps as different as we think?
  - b. Neo-colonial
  - c. Extractive

### Journalism questions

6. How do you think the British print media (7 papers) portrays Chinese development in Africa?
  - a. Frames such as neo-colonialism, a better alternative to Western development etc.
7. Can you tell me about how your writing process worked, were you granted a degree of flexibility in this subject to cover the pieces which interested you?
  - a. Influence of editor
  - b. Newspaper ideology
8. What are the primary influences on the pieces you write that perhaps steer the direction of your pieces?
  - a. Interests
  - b. Views
  - c. Own Biases
  - d. Editors
9. How do you think the British public perceives Chinese development in Africa?

- a. Do they even think about it?
  - b. Perhaps perceive it as inferior to western by default
10. What do you think the quality of British journalism regarding Chinese development is like?
- a. Accuracy
  - b. Engagement
  - c. Biases
11. What sort of biases is there in the coverage of Chinese development in the British media?
12. What can the British media do if anything to improve coverage of development?

These questions were selected in order to maximise the contribution this study makes to understanding the content which is observed in the British media. The interview had a few key aims. 1) to understand the role or interests of the journalist in the pieces they write. 2) to understand their opinions on Chinese development in Africa and how they manifest in their writing. 3) understand what influences the journalists' writing. 4) gain greater insight into the UK press. The questions are leading to a degree particularly in asking about biases in the coverage of Chinese development. This question was included to attempt to capture what much of the literature stated regarding an anti-China bias which was not captured in the content analysis. It was included for journalists to disagree with this fact as much as agree and as such the leading question in this regard has been analysed with particular caution.

Asking questions which press about Chinese development was also a challenge as some of the journalists had little knowledge or expertise on Chinese development but were writing about it from a niche perspective.

## V. Results

### 1. Quantitative Results

The quantitative element of the study involved the examination of 140 newspapers from across the 7 British broadsheet newspapers. From the sample obtained, much variation was apparent among the news sources and the means by which Chinese development in Africa was portrayed. From an academic perspective, the lack of critical engagement with some of the prevalent rhetoric regarding Chinese development in Africa was very evident. The articles which obtained a better grasp of the intricacies of Chinese development were generally written by journalists who regularly write about African development, Chinese foreign policy or journalists who were the Africa editor for their respective newspapers. Very often the inclusion of dialogue regarding Chinese development in these newspapers was merely as a side story to another topic of discussion. Compounding this some of the newspapers would often have very UK-centric viewpoints. Many examples cited Britain's foreign policy and relations with domestic politics and the lack of British involvement in Africa relative to China. As such these articles were not addressing Chinese development in Africa directly, but rather through a rival power's lens and were often scornful that China can achieve such influence in Africa in a relatively short period. This reflection of Chinese investment in Africa from this UK-centric approach leads to a skewed picture of Chinese development in Africa. The newspapers do not necessarily have a distinct anti-China bias, but by approaching Chinese development from a perspective of a rival power, which many of the news articles did, a perspective which displays China as a rival to British development and soft power in a region where Britain had previously had much influence.

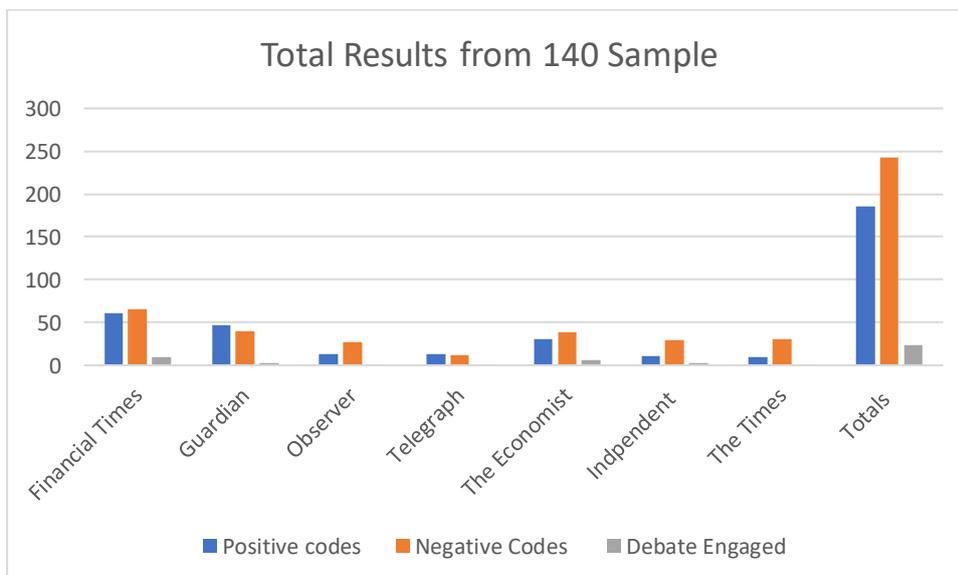
Despite the aforementioned UK-centricities, The Financial Times, The Guardian and the Economist emerged as the newspapers that critically engage the most with Chinese development in Africa and showed an understanding of the nuances involved with development, which was reflected both quantitatively via the expected codes and qualitatively through the content of the newspapers. By virtue of the articles simply focusing

on issues or news of Chinese development rather than perhaps what a British politician said about Chinese development and creating a story, a far more nuanced piece of journalism can be observed. Engaging critically whilst acknowledging previous development attempts and showing knowledge of African social and political affairs produced the articles which are most relevant to the true dialogue surrounding Chinese development. These articles created a critical dialogue which contributes to the challenging of development paradigms and ultimately can positively impact the way development is carried out. For example, a Financial Times article spoke very critically of Chinese development but suggested that many of the Western critiques were disingenuous and overdone and in reality, the journalist suggested “China is no philanthropist, but its rise may still represent Africa's best hope of escaping poverty” (Pilling, 2009). This provides a balanced critical overview which contributed to critical dialogue. In this regard, there is no concerted perpetuation of a hegemonic development paradigm as described by Stokke (2009).

On the other hand, some of the news sources failed to create any sort of critical dialogue and simply reflected on Britain's role in the world regarding development. This provided a narrow scope from which the public in the UK, and also farther afield would gain their knowledge and opinions regarding development. It is not that the British media promotes just one development paradigm, but that there is a general failure to examine any development paradigms through this journalism. This focus on Britain's role in Africa certainly created a rather paternalistic perspective of development which is unsurprising given critiques of Western development efforts as being paternalistic as such. In this regard, certain news sources through their UK-centric viewpoint and lack of critical engagement contribute to a hegemonic development paradigm. Though not necessarily pressing for a specific form of development or development paradigm, by espousing this paternalistic viewpoint these media sources support the work that British development efforts have made and ultimately as such support a narrower Western approach to development failing to critically engage with either Chinese development or South-South development ideologies.

Newspaper	Positive codes	Negative Codes	Debate Engaged
Financial Times	61	65	9
Guardian	47	40	3
Observer	13	27	1
Telegraph	13	12	1
The Economist	31	39	6
Independent	11	29	2
The Times	9	31	1
Totals	185	243	23

*Fig 5.1 Total positive and negative codes, and articles which engaged the debate by newspaper*



*5.2 Bar chart displaying the total number of articles with negative/positive codes present, and the number of articles which engaged the debate regarding development.*

The Financial Times was the newspaper which contained the highest number of observed codes in the study. In total in the 20 articles, there were 126 frames noted, 61 positive codes, a further 65 negative codes, and 9 of the 20 articles contained content which actively contributed to the debate regarding Chinese development in Africa. From this empirical evidence, it can be noted that the Financial Times provided a high standard of coverage of

Chinese development in this period. The higher volume of codes observed suggests a more critical engagement and also one which includes a degree of academic backing as these codes were derived from the academic literature. 16 of the 20 articles contained at least 1 positive frame and 17 of the 20 articles included at least 1 negative frame, which again reflects the balance in coverage which is reflected by the total number of codes observed. Overall the empirical evidence suggests a depth in coverage, unbiased coverage, and importantly a critical view and opinion. This journalism and coverage provide a basis for effective dialogue to occur regarding development paradigms and ultimately contribute to that debate and conversation towards enhancing development.

The Guardian coverage in this study showed a similar pattern to that of the Financial Times with some small digressions differentiating the newspapers. The Guardian contained a total of 87 codes observed, which is relatively high. 47 of these codes were positive codes regarding Chinese development and 40 of them were negative codes. Unlike The Financial Times, these articles did not critically engage with this topic to the same extent. Only 3 of the 20 articles engaged the debate to any extent, failing to have the critical insight that the Financial Times had. 16 of the 20 Guardian articles contained at least 1 positive code and 15 of 20 articles contained at least one negative code. Again, from this evidence, one sees an unbiased coverage with very little difference between the volume of critique and support for Chinese development. Unlike the Financial Times, however, the Guardian failed often to be clear in displaying the pros and cons of Chinese development and vaguer and more open to interpretation for the reader. This is reflected by the fact that only 3 of the 20 articles engaged the debate surrounding development and as such interesting content was observed which was not put into context to make it a more viable and influential piece of journalism.

The Observer despite being the Guardian's sister paper had some noticeable differences. In total 40 codes were observed across the 20 articles, and of these 13 were positive codes and 27 were negative codes. This displays that the Observer created media which is predominantly critical of Chinese development in Africa when examining this topic through the academic frames obtained from the literature. Just 1 article contained dialogue which was considered to engage critically with the debates surrounding Chinese development. As such the Observer failed to produce journalism which could be viewed as academically useful and contribute to challenging development dialogue and development paradigms. 7 of the 20 articles contained at least one positive code, and 12 of 20 articles contained at least one negative code. As such this data displays that despite many articles not containing any or

many of these frames the overwhelming negative framing of articles came from just a few articles regarding the topic rather than many articles repeating the same sentiments.

The Telegraph contained the lowest number of codes of all the news sources analysed. Just 25 frames were observed highlighting a lack of critical engagement with the topic. The coverage however was free from clear biases as 13 positive codes and 12 negative codes were observed among the 20 articles showing a balance in coverage. Only 1 article from the 20 examined engaged with the debate regarding Chinese development in Africa. 5 of the 20 examined articles contained at least one positive code and 7 of the 20 articles contained at least one negative code. The lack of critical engagement with Chinese development in Africa in the Telegraph is evident by the lack of codes observed. This ultimately shows there is not a direct bias in the Telegraph but that the articles are of a lesser standard in terms of their engagement and thus do not contribute to challenging development paradigms or dialogue surrounding development.

The Economist contained 70 codes in total from the 20-article sample. Of these 70 codes noted 31 were positive codes regarding Chinese development and 39 were negative codes displaying a small margin of overall negative coverage. 13 of the 20 articles contained at least 1 negative frame and 12 of the 20 articles contained at least one negative frame. When it came to critically engaging with Chinese development in Africa 6 of the 20 articles engaged the debate on development, displaying a more thorough level of engagement than some of the other newspapers.

The Independent contained a total of 40 codes across the 20 articles. Of these 40 codes, 11 were positive codes and 29 were negative codes displaying a more negative coverage of Chinese development. Only two articles from the times contained content which contributed to the discussion regarding Chinese development by engaging the debate on Chinese development. Just 5 of the 20 articles contained a code which portrayed Chinese development in a positive light, whereas 11 of the 20 articles contained a code which highlighted Chinese development in a negative light. Despite the presence of the codes only 2 articles showed balance and understanding of the debate regarding Chinese development.

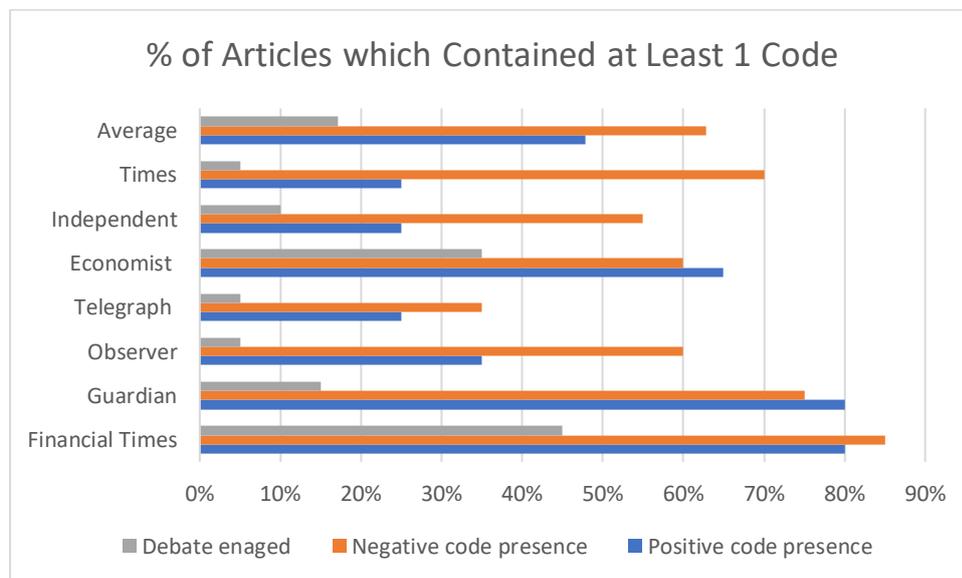
Finally, the Times contained a total of 40 of the codes among the 20 articles. Of these codes, only 9 were positive regarding Chinese development and the other 31 codes obtained were negative, showing clear critical regard for Chinese development. Only a single article of the

20 critically engaged with both sides of the debate regarding Chinese development, providing the same level of lack of critical insight as *The Observer* and *The Telegraph*. Of the 20 articles, 5 contained at least one positive frame, and 14 of the 20 articles contained at least one negative frame.

The individual codes which proved most evident throughout the articles were also recognised. The most frequent codes which portrayed Chinese development in a positive light were support of Chinese infrastructural development, general economic positive framing, positive economic growth and posing Chinese development in Africa as a positive from a geopolitical perspective. These results were largely expected, primarily focussing on the infrastructural and economic benefits of Chinese development which is often framed in this pragmatic fashion. The positive portrayal of China geopolitically was most often due to framing Chinese development as an alternative to Western development and challenges the traditionally near-hegemonic role some actors have had in Africa at different time periods. As such it was framing Chinese development more as an alternative source of development and framed their willingness to invest in infrastructure as a positive in this regard where other states' development policies do not. From an economic perspective, the codes frequently cited growth and expected economic growth as positive aspects of Chinese development in Africa, highlighting the success stories of this macroeconomic development. Framing development as mutually beneficial was not expected in the results initially. The use of the terms "mutually beneficial" creates a standout headline-like statement regarding Chinese development which had not been recognised heavily in the literature examined but was very prominent in the news articles. This style of statement was not prominent in the literature as to include a statement like that in an academic article would require a lot of critical engagement and debate to decide its suitability. On the other hand, journalists are not held to these high standards so discussing mutually beneficial development and framing Chinese development as such is prominent and conducive to writing articles.

A high frequency of some of the negative codes was also noted in the quantitative analysis of the study. The most frequently used negative codes were debt, framing China as a nefarious geopolitical actor and framing Chinese development as extractive. This style of framing is what was expected in the results. These frames are simple to understand and contribute to a sensationalist coverage of the issue which is conducive to creating an article which draws in a

general audience. Debt trap diplomacy was a term which was regularly featured in the articles and is unsurprising given the media attention it has gotten in the US and western media sphere. Extractive framing of Chinese development was prevalent but also was not obvious when reading the articles at first read. Articles tended to have a small indication of China's use of oil, minerals, forestry or other raw commodities in return for the development projects they conducted. Even if the article was praising Chinese development this extractive framing would follow Chinese development.



*Fig 5.3, The percentage of articles which contained at least one of the codes examined with negative frames noted in 63% of articles and positive frames noted in 48% of articles highlighting a slightly negative coverage.*

Newspaper	Positive code presence	Negative code presence	Debate engaged
Financial Times	80%	85%	45%
Guardian	80%	75%	15%
Observer	35%	60%	5%
Telegraph	25%	35%	5%
Economist	65%	60%	35%
Independent	25%	55%	10%
Times	25%	70%	5%
<b>Average</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>17%</b>

*Fig 5.4 The percentage breakdown of the presence of at least one code in the articles by newspaper. Just 17% of the articles examined engaged with the debate surrounding development critically.*

Positive codes	Total
Economic (General)	24
Interest rates	8
Economic growth	27
Employment (General)	2
Local Jobs	3
Environmental (General)	2
Emissions (Green Investment)	1
No environmental degradation	0
Improvement of quality of life	4
Positive social effects	2
Poses Chinese involvement in development as positive for geopolitics	21
Supports Chinese Government	1
Support of infrastructural Dev	32
General support for Chinese dev policy	29
Quality of development	4
Positive local view	5
Mutual Benefit	17
In support of lack of conditionality	3

*Fig 5.5 the prevalence of individual positive codes amongst the sample highlighted in red are the more frequent codes observed*

Negative Codes	Total
Economic (General)	4
Economic viability	17
Debt	31
Critique of economic growth (or lack of it)	0
Employment (General)	6
Critical of lack of local jobs or external jobs	15
Deforestation	1
Higher Emissions	0
Environmental degradation	10
Environment (General)	3
Negative effect on the quality of life	0
Negative social effects	5
Poses China as a nefarious Geopolitical actor	36
Critique of the Chinese government	2
Critical of infrastructural approach to dev	2
Lack of conditionality	5
General criticism of Chinese dev Policy	10
Extractive	44
Negative local view	7
Neo-Colonialism	12
Human Rights	21
Democracy (or associated)	12

*Fig 5.6 the prevalence of individual negative codes in the sample, codes highlighted in red are the more prevalent codes.*

## 2. Qualitative Results.

The qualitative results for the content analysis provide a greater explanation for why there is a distinct lack of critical engagement with development paradigms within these articles.

Three primary themes emerged which explain the reason such low levels of engagement which contribute to development in a critical academic fashion are seen, they are 1) article content, 2) Journalist's specialities, and 3) UK-centricism.

The article content emerged as potentially the most important factor for understanding the data which was collected by the content analysis. As previously mentioned very often Chinese development in Africa was merely mentioned as a side note on an article which primarily focuses on other topics, including British domestic politics. By focusing primarily on other topics as such Chinese development is portrayed often through a small snapshot or one line which does not capture the critical engagement this research hoped to find within the newspapers. For example, Chinese investment in Africa was regularly mentioned as concerns emerged with the fall of commodity prices circa 2015. The articles extensively examine why commodity prices are falling and the implications of this. However, articles also tie in the effects of commodity prices on the debt of African states. Though there is clear relevance between commodity prices and Chinese investment, this relevance is not explored and unfortunately a snapshot which contains very little relevance or critical engagement results. Despite this being content which is not strictly relevant this is still content which has the ability to influence. These snapshots can contribute to the formulation of opinions, and ultimately damage dialogues regarding development. In this regard, these snapshots of information provide powerful means of influence whilst failing to look at a broader context. If this is the only lens from which individuals obtain their information, this content can ultimately influence opinion and stifle development dialogue by steering the conversation to an understanding which is not well-founded.

The journalists and their respective specialities were also a clear reason why coverage did not engage with development critically. From examining the article's content and the journalist writing the specific content it is clear that there is a lack of knowledge and expertise among some of the journalists with regard to the nuances of Chinese development in Africa, development as a whole, and importantly critical awareness of previous development attempts. For instance, one journalist who was interviewed was a correspondent for

technology, cryptocurrency, and informatics. His article in the sample provided a small insight into Chinese technological development and rollout of 5g in Africa. The insight provided from the article was relevant to individuals in tech circles perhaps but unfortunately, the content regarding Chinese development did not contribute to dialogue regarding development. What is apparent is that Chinese development in Africa is often receiving coverage from journalists who approach it from a certain angle and ultimately provide a tainted snapshot of development. This journalism was generally a feature in news sources which would comment on UK domestic and international politics, whilst providing some insight into Chinese development which barely scratches the surface of what is a complex debate. One such example looked at the Covid-19 vaccine rollout and included the Chinese vaccine rollout in Africa as an example of Chinese soft power in the region, “*Emmanuel Macron has also announced vaccine-sharing by France, with five per cent of its stock being sent to poorer countries, especially in Africa. There have been accusations that while G7 states have ordered more than 1.5 billion vaccines more than their population requires, Russia and China are winning influence through "vaccine diplomacy" by supplying developing countries. (Sengupta, 2021)*” This quote was out of context with the rest of the article which focussed more generally on vaccine rollout, yet this inclusion of Chinese vaccine rollout in Africa and framing it as “vaccine diplomacy” discredits China’s efforts when the West failed to have the same impact distributing the vaccine. In this instance, the article was written by the Defence and Diplomatic editor for the newspaper, and perhaps as such focuses on this issue from a stance which reflects that. An intersectional approach to examining Chinese development in Africa is the best way to examine this topic to create as encompassing a picture as possible. Approaching these issues from one-dimension leaves much to be desired with regard to accurate and effective journalism which can challenge development dialogue and ultimately improve practices.

The articles which provided the most debate and broader overview of Chinese development in Africa, even when looking at a niche story, tended to be written by scholars who had studied African, politics, development, or economics or were written by an African editor who appeared to have a good grasp of the situation. These articles engaged critically with both the positive aspects and negative aspects of Chinese development, presenting the information in an unbiased fashion allowing the reader to draw conclusions which were not binary as some articles would promote. The experience and knowledge of the journalists in this instance displayed the content in an effective manner which actively challenged

development paradigms and encouraged debate. The Financial Times emerged as the newspaper which had the best standard of coverage and outshone the other news sources in this regard. Journalists from the financial times tended to have a greater interest and background in development and often African voices and perspectives were included. Including African perspectives, whether it is President of Rwanda Paul Kagame who is featured in one of the news sources or African economist Dambisa Moyo, gives a different perspective. Even with the likes of Kagame being included in the dialogue despite running what is an increasingly authoritarian regime in Rwanda, it does allow an understanding of the alternative Chinese development in Africa poses and provides a perspective as to why leaders like Kagame (2009) are so eager for Chinese development. Examining Chinese development through this lens also puts the agency on these African leaders and creates a far less paternalistic dialogue, diverging from a Western-centric perspective.

UK-centricism emerged frequently throughout the coverage of Chinese development in Africa. UK-centricism was exhibited through the constant framing of Chinese development. Analysing Chinese development efforts which are often in competition with British development efforts through this lens can lead to biases. Article content regularly utilised this British frame which contributes to this differential bias providing an almost hypocritical view of Chinese development. The use of colonial language referring to the “new scramble for Africa” once more highlights this UK-centric view. The scornful, bitter rhetoric which accompanied some of the articles posed China as a nefarious geopolitical actor and a negative for Africa yet wanted Britain to get a slice of the cake in this new scramble and gain influence in Africa. On one hand, criticising Chinese development in Africa and labelling it as neo-colonial, and on the other hand, criticising Britain’s lack of influence and dwindling relationship in Africa creates a bizarre argument. The news sources often lacked a critical overview of Britain’s former colonial impact in Africa and the harm that has been caused by Western spearheaded development plans. The insensitivity towards previous colonialism and utter ignorance when referring to Chinese development as neo-colonial yet consequently encouraging Britain to adopt a similar relationship to China’s with Africa is poor. Chinese development is framed as neo-colonial, British media reports the intentions of the DfID to gain a stake in some of Africa’s faster-growing economies, yet this development is not subjected to the same neo-colonial frame. Though this is beyond the remit of the quantitative content analysis, this language is rife throughout most of the news sources displaying a pro-UK bias rather than a distinct anti-China bias. It is important to mention that this

juxtaposition of stances regarding development is often spread among the articles but overall, this emerges as a theme of the media sources as a whole.

Another clear theme which was observed was how Chinese development was framed at different time periods depending on what else is happening in the world, or in China at that period. For example, the dominant news story in recent years involving China has been the 2019-2020 Hong-Kong Protests. When examining Chinese development this important event often was noted in the articles as a reason to detract from Chinese development efforts “If we stand up to China? [sic] on human rights, on Hong Kong, on infiltration of our universities, or for that matter on our ambassador's right to state her views publicly? We are increasingly not alone”(Lucas, 2021). Though this quote has nothing to do with development by including it in articles which engage with the topic of Chinese development the reader is subjected to a clear bias. Approaching Chinese development from this negative frame fails to engage critically with the debate surrounding Chinese development and instead the frame is tainted by other negative news stories in the media. In contrast to this, the media which was produced in and around the time of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) gatherings contained a more positive framing. The coverage which mentions FOCAC focuses on some of the positive soundbites which emerge as a result of this forum. Despite these positive soundbites, the articles regarding FOCAC provide some examples of articles which adopt a critical perspective which engaged with the debates regarding Chinese development. This critique of the Chinese development plans was still through a UK-centric frame but nonetheless asked some important questions and cast doubt on certain aspects of Chinese development. If the shoe was on the other foot however and there was a DfID forum with African stakeholders, it would be very unlikely that the media coverage would engage as critically as it did when China engages in this forum.

### 3. Interview Results

The interviews largely supported much of the literature and the findings of the content analysis. In total 4 interviews were conducted with each taking about 35 minutes to complete. There was variation in the responses obtained from the journalists which likely linked to the roles and experiences of the journalists. For instance, the journalist based in China had a far more positive view of the British media coverage of Chinese development as he was in China commenting on China. The journalists based in the UK were persuasive in their argument that the coverage of China in Africa was poor as they contended that journalists don't travel to China or Africa to engage accurately in the media often. When looking at these interviews the core themes which influenced the journalists' opinions were their position/experience, their location, and the topics they write about. Ultimately there were a variety of factors which influenced the journalism which was produced, which overlapped and compounded the general picture of the journalism produced.

#### Framing and narratives

The news agenda and narratives which the British media expect journalists to write about were a very prevalent theme when interviewing the journalists. More senior journalists suggested that their work was not subjected to the same level of expectancy to toe the line of the overall newspaper narrative, which they put down to the centricities of the newspapers they wrote for. They did however note that the common narratives which lead back to a "cold war" style dialogue were the expected narratives that perhaps receive the most attention among the general public. When writing articles regarding Chinese development in Africa one of the primary influences or concerns for a journalist was the readership and creating a narrative which engaged with the public and providing media as such which would encourage readers to buy newspapers or generate clicks online. As such a limitation of the UK press is noted, where newsworthiness is established by the general public, and narratives of Chinese development in Africa are ultimately influenced by this. The prevalent news stories which have achieved the most attention in recent years in the UK media regarding China have focussed on negative Chinese stories. From the violation of Uyghur Muslim human rights in Xinjiang to clashes between pro-democracy and pro-China interests in Hong Kong. When

this is the media that is consumed by the general public and written about most by journalists it creates a predisposition or frame by which media outlets then view China. This frame in which Chinese development is written through as such doesn't engage with the facts about Chinese development and instead sticks to narratives of Chinese development infringing on human rights or saddling African states with debt. This view which is reflected by the content analysis is not implicit in an anti-China bias in the coverage of Chinese development in Africa. What it undoubtedly constitutes is a framing bias as media sources toe the line of the long-standing narratives of the British media. One of the journalists said "It's very difficult to get approved [sic] for a China story into this news media, extremely difficult" describing the difficulties faced when diverging from the typical narratives of China or examining a topic that perhaps doesn't reflect the British public's interests. This same journalist also noted the quality of journalism, and the quality of development journalism could be vastly improved if these narratives were challenged, or new narratives were introduced within the media which diverged from these norms.

Finally, the journalists interviewed all suggested that incorporating African and Chinese voices when it comes to Chinese development in Africa would improve understanding of the nuances of the topic and ultimately prevent this framing. This idea has been promoted in development theory itself as many development stakeholders now promote an intersectional approach to development issues. Aiming to create a more inclusive dialogue which respects the agency of African actors and avoids previous paternalistic approaches will allow for a better understanding of development and reflect more accurate coverage. This paternalistic coverage was noted within the interviews also with one journalist suggesting coverage often reflects the interests of some of the British public who are "still thinking about when the sun never set on the British Empire". Particularly given Britain's colonial legacy one would hope that a more tentative and inclusive approach to development narratives could occur in the British broadsheet media.

## Quality

Another common theme amongst all the journalists was criticising the lack of journalists engaging with the situations on the ground and the lack of incorporation of intersectional and local views. The hypocrisy of having a journalist writing about issues in Hong Kong or the

SGR from their desk in London was outlined by one journalist. They argued that the UK public would scoff at the views of a journalist in Hong Kong writing about affairs such as Brexit and its intricacies with the union and Northern Ireland yet the British media routinely covers stories in Africa from desks in London. The journalist suggested that “they haven’t got a clue” what they are writing about and as such the journalism fails to be as accurate as it could be. In contrast to this, the journalist who had spent time situated in China suggested the quality of British journalism was good. They maintained that British journalists tend to have high professional standards and that journalists do travel to the regions they write about to research their stories. The difference between the journalists in China is that they are surrounded by a media outlet based in the area they are writing about which leads to a more positive view of the quality of journalism. On the contrary, when a journalist is not based in the region that they are covering there were sentiments among the interviewed journalists which reflected a lack of quality journalism.

### Influences

When discussing the influences of the journalists on the content they produced there were once more clear differences between the opinions of the journalists based on their positions within the media institutions and their experiences. The financial editor of one of the major UK broadsheets was adamant that they could write about what they wanted to write when they wanted to. They said their work had never been edited to any major degree by more senior editors, they had never been told what they could or couldn’t write about and that ultimately, they were given a large degree of freedom to cover Chinese development in Africa in whatever regard they saw fit. The one influence which was noted by the journalist was that it had to appeal to the consumer, namely the British public. As such this journalist has written pieces that perhaps break from the narratives surrounding China more than the other journalists as they were not subjected to the same levels of control from their superiors. On the other hand, the other journalists said that they often felt they had to approach the topic of Chinese development in Africa with a degree of sensitivity in order to get stories approved by their editors. As such, they were influenced to conform to the expected narratives of the newspapers.

## Views of Chinese development

Despite the general media narratives outlined above, all journalists who were interviewed spoke of Chinese development as being misrepresented and misunderstood. Largely the journalists perceived there to be a framing bias by approaching the topic of Chinese development from a British perspective. There was however a prevalent theme of Chinese development being a bonafide and worthy alternative to Western development also. One journalist cited the “bad blood” from colonialism as a reason for African states to open their arms up to Chinese development. Even post-colonialism and the relationships that some states have retained with former colonial powers leave a bad taste in the mouth of many Africans which leaves them to turn to Chinese development as an alternative. An example of French post-colonialism and monetary post-colonialism discussed by one of the journalists highlighted this notion and suggested China has a comparative advantage over their European rivals who have an extensive dark colonial history on the continent where China does not.

## Improvements to British media?

Each of the interviewed journalists agreed that there were definite improvements that the UK media could enact to improve the coverage of development news. The primary point made by all was to actually get journalists writing about African development from Africa, and not from their desk in London from second-hand information. It is unlikely the UK public would listen to foreign media outlets covering their domestic politics, yet there is a double standard where western media outlets lead the dialogue and create the narrative of development in Africa. Compounding this idea by locating in Africa or the developing world whilst covering these stories not only will the information being provided be more accurate, but it could also allow the opportunity for African voices to be heard. The journalists noted this in the interview “And so when you talk to people who are from the West, working in development which most British reporters will, or reporters for UK newspapers, well, you get a very different take on it than if you talk to Africans, or if you talk to people from East Asia who work for these companies that are doing this work”, highlighting the lack of platforming of African voices. This one-sided media narrative as such continues to perpetuate a paternalistic relationship with the UK media failing to incorporate African voices yet espousing views on

behalf of Africa. One of the journalists noted that this goes beyond having correspondents in the developing world but that media outlets themselves in the UK tend to be quite ethnically and nationally homogenous. As such employing a team of white, British, male, primarily middle-class journalists provides a perspective which is stagnant, conforms with the narrative the newspapers seek to impose and fails to incorporate the voices of the people who are ultimately impacted by development.

Decolonization of journalism came through as a topic in the interviews also. Glück (2018) highlights the presence of such a dominant elitist “Western” discourse in the media, “leaving aside indigenous and localized philosophical traditions originating in non-Western settings”. Media outlets perpetuating these western discourses regarding African development in this instance continue this cycle which undermines African perspectives. This once more leads to a paternalistic view of Africa and Africans, rather than incorporating an intersectional dialogue and including the stakeholders in Africa who have genuine skin in the game.

*“Intersectionality investigates how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life. As an analytical tool intersectionality views categories of race, class, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity and age -among others- as interrelated and mutually shaping one another. Intersectionality is a way of understanding and explaining complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences.”* (Collins and Blige, 2020). Incorporating an intersectional approach to journalism into these media outlets provides a base which could provide a more engaging approach to examining development. An all-white, male, British, middle-class, media outlet is simply going to produce journalism that by and large will reflect their experiences, views and interests. Incorporating African voices on African development will ultimately provide a perspective which reflects African development far more accurately than it is currently being portrayed. Similarly engaging with a Chinese-perspectives on their development may help with the constant misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Chinese development which the interviewed journalists suggested was an issue. As one interviewed journalist put it “you get a lot more of the LSE (London School of Economics) and a lot less of the transport ministry in Ghana” in the British media highlighting how the British media views and approaches issues of development in a paternalistic and UK-centric regard. Challenging the narratives, creating dialogue, and understanding African and Chinese perspectives as such emerged as the primary takeaways which would improve the accuracy of British journalism. The journalists unanimously held this view despite having their own role in the media and being part of the

cohort that ultimately perpetuates the narratives which are observed in the media coverage of Chinese development in Africa.

## VI. Reflection.

Covering such a broad topic which has been given a large amount of attention in both the media and in academia has meant that the scope of this study has been narrowed. The primary reflection on the study would be to expand the breadth of the analysis. It has been justified why this study focussed on the UK broadsheet newspapers rather than just the tabloids. In spite of this, the analysis of tabloid newspapers in the UK would give a more general picture of the media the broader UK public consumes. This paper focussed on the broadsheets as they have a more middle-class readership akin to politicians and elites who are the decision-makers who ultimately influence politics and consequently development policy, as explained above. Examining the broader scene of British media engagement as such wouldn't contribute to the research question to the same degree but still would allow for a better understanding of how the British public perceives development in Africa. Thus, it would contribute in a different way to the study and perhaps highlights some of the more sensationalist stories from Africa that the UK media tends to focus on. Furthermore, expanding the sample size of the articles would contribute to a more accurate analysis and give results which would be stronger.

The interview part of the analysis compounded what the content analysis had discovered in this study but furthermore built upon this foundation. If this study was to be expanded upon engaging with more journalists would undoubtedly strengthen this study. The small variations which were noticed among the journalists also were interesting, but only interviewing 4 journalists meant bonafide conclusions regarding why journalists had a variance in opinions couldn't be drawn. Conducting this study with many more interviews and having the ability to stratify the results of the interviews based on the position and experience of the journalist, their background, their location, and their views would undoubtedly paint a more robust picture of the media regarding development. Alongside this stratification which could occur, increasing the number of interviews would create a larger sample size by which more concrete conclusions could be drawn. Contacting the journalists was the issue which made it difficult to obtain a greater sample size in this regard, and even when journalists did reply some were defensive and didn't want to be quoted on the record despite anonymity. When the interviews were carried out, however, these fears were alleviated, and the journalists were very comfortable speaking openly. Perhaps using the journalists who were interviewed, and

their networks could help resolve this issue, but then alternatively it could just lead to contacting journalists whose opinions resonate with one another and not give an accurate reflection of those writing the articles.

Finally, although it would further stretch the scope of the study, a content analysis of British, US, African, and Chinese newspapers and their portrayal of Chinese development would ultimately provide an all-encompassing depiction of the nexus between the media framing and development. Examining how former colonial countries view development also would be interesting by there would also be further challenges with language if a study of development coverage in Francophone Africa was to occur for example. Engaging with all aspects of this topic as such would create a piece of literature which could contribute much more broadly to critical approaches to viewing development and also potentially allow for overlap between approaches to development prioritising improving quality of life in Africa.

One concern with the methods section was that codes were posed as positive and negative. With some codes used, there was not always a direct opposite code and different codes emerged on both the positive and negative side of the codebook. For example, of the negative frames utilised was “Deforestation” caused by Chinese development. The opposite code to this would be either reforestation or the protection of forestry. These are unrealistic codes to expect to see in the articles. As such there was not an equal number of positive and negative codes as more negative codes emerged from the literature review and the articles themselves. This would appear to be because Chinese development sees more negative attention in the media but applying this binary positive-negative scale as such doesn’t fit exactly to this situation. Focusing more heavily on the qualitative elements of the study is optimal as such, but the quantitative element of the methods still is relevant to provide a quantitative overview of the topic.

## VII. Discussion

### 1. Applying Mawdsley's Framework

Mawdsley's framework for understanding Chinese representation in the British media formed much of the basis of this study and ultimately facilitated a greater understanding of the situation. Mawdsley's 4 core themes for British media coverage of Chinese development in Africa were.

1. Homogenisation of China and Chinese Actors, and isolation from business interests,
2. Focus on the negative impacts of China on the African continent
3. The portrayal of Africans as victims or villains
4. Complacent account of the role and interest of different western actors in Africa

There was broadly evidence which helped support Mawdsley's themes. However, there was some deviation in the coverage which displays variations in the patterns since Mawdsley carried out her study.

Homogenisation of China and Chinese actors, and isolation from business interests were evident throughout the sources. As aforementioned Chinese development in Africa is not a monolithic operation led by the Chinese government. From individual actors travelling to Africa in search of making a living and conducting businesses, to large infrastructural projects such as the SGR in Kenya. The deviation between these actors and the businesses, individuals, NGOs and state bodies in between, their different agendas, priorities, sources of funding, and links to the Chinese government is huge. Despite this variation in Chinese development actors in Africa, compounding Mawdsley's themes, it was found that the British media in the period this study has been carried out reflects Mawdsley's theme by lumping all of these actors under the umbrella of Chinese development with little critical engagement with the different actors it creates a viewpoint which is not only inaccurate but ultimately damages the reputation of Chinese development. The lack of differentiation between actors means that when for example an independent Chinese mining business is associated with improper labour conditions or violence rather than differentiating this fact as an individual

business it reflects instead on all Chinese development. Writing articles from such a narrow perspective is ultimately poor journalism and fails to critically engage with the issues at hand.

Political coverage in the UK media has more generally become increasingly negative in recent years (Boomgaarden and Boumans, 2011). Boomgaarden and Boumans (2011) suggest that there has become a fixation on negative media with a focus on conflict which then leads to more negative media being produced regularly. Furthermore, Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010) suggest that media consumers consume media which already reflects the views and opinions which they have. As such news sources tend to write negative news stories and repeat the same narratives which reflect their reader's perspectives (Boomgaarden and Boumans 2010, Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010). The result of this is an echo chamber of repeated views and repeated negativity. Despite this negative media landscape, there is no evidence to suggest a focus on the negative impacts of China on the continent of Africa which is disproportionate to the negativity which is prevalent throughout the media. Many of the classic tropes and criticisms of Chinese development are prevalent and are not critically engaged with in spite of this. The overall quantitative results suggest that in reality there is more negative framing of Chinese development, but this is likely a reflection of the media landscape than a framing bias regarding Chinese development. As such there is not sufficient evidence to support Mawdsley's theme.

Mawdsley's third theme suggests that the British media portrays Africans as victims or villains. Where Mawdsley highlighted content which spoke down about populations in Africa and provided scathing opinions about African leaders this was not the case in this study. The UK-centric media often failed to mention Africans themselves and instead opted for a perspective which did not focus on the livelihoods of populations or the actions of individual leaders. Even leaders such as Mugabe were mentioned in these articles as Mawdsley noted in her study, but unlike Mawdsley's findings, there was no portrayal of him as a villain. The lack of critical engagement meant that even where valid arguments regarding the agency of African leaders and population in their development could be made, they were not.

Platforming Paul Kagame in one of the articles to speak about development also further displays the lack of villainization of African leaders, for a man who now runs a despotic regime (Pruitt, 2018). If there was the villainization of African leaders present in the British media this platform undoubtedly would not be granted.

Complacency around the role and interests of different western actors in Africa was clearly evident in these media sources. This complacency was easily identified by both omissions and some ignorances which emerged. The framing of debt-trap diplomacy and the threat of land grabs infringing sovereignty was very prevalent regarding the seizing of Hambantota port in Sri Lanka. The complacency in the coverage of this topic was noted in the lack of context surrounding the issue. As Bräutigam and Rathmire (2021) outline China put forward the best and most feasible option for the construction and running of the port fighting off both European and Canadian deals. The struggles of the port led to financial turmoil which led to Sri Lanka loaning out the port to the experienced China Merchants group as previous feasibility reports funded by the Canadian International Development Agency had suggested would be necessary (Bräutigam and Rathmire, 2021). The debt trap diplomacy framing as argued by Bräutigam is exaggerated and comes from a Western frame. The debt trap framing still emerges despite other Western interests in the same project and despite China putting forward better offers than their western counterparts. If the media wants to be critical of development that is entirely fair, but it is also important to not be complacent and understand that the Western alternative is likely not particularly different. Langan when describing Chinese development captures this element of complacency the media creates “*There is a distinct irony here that the language of neo-colonialism, whilst almost entirely taboo in the current discussion of Western policies, is heartily embraced by Western media and politicians alike with regards to Sino-African affairs*” (Langan, 2017). Simplifying this even further, Western media sources ultimately fail to show self-awareness of Western development and instead attack Chinese development which has far more in common with western development than one would be led to believe reading these media sources.

The UK government has recently spoken about their intentions to ramp up its involvement with development in Africa (UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Ford, 2022). Their policy aims to increase trade in Africa which is currently stifled by “tariffs, red tape and limited infrastructure” (UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Ford, 2022). The UK’s intentions to achieve free trade and reduce barriers to trade with much of Africa are uncannily similar to that of China with the exception that China invests and develops the infrastructure which the UK government suggests stifles development when it is absent. For the UK media to exhibit such criticism of Chinese development yet still meddle in African development after the abject failures of SAPs show the issues with the complacency

of the British media in looking at other Western development sources. Langan (2017) once more echoes this perspective identified by Mawdsley saying

*“In contrast to the meddling of the West, China is perceived as a level-headed actor able to engage African countries for mutual industrialisation and infrastructure-led development”.*

In this case, this differential bias in the form of complacency surrounding the role and interest of different western actors in Africa almost certainly contributes to the gatekeeping of development policy.

The anti-China biases which have been alluded to in some of the literature were not evidently present in the content analysis, unlike in the interviews, where the journalists suggested an anti-China bias. What was clear was that there is a Western-centric and UK-centric framing in the coverage of Chinese development in Africa. Approaching the issues of African development from this perspective contributes to a continually paternalistic view of African development, both ignoring African agency and letting UK interests influence the journalists' writing. When asked what the British media could do to improve coverage of development in the interview process one journalist simply responded “go look at it”. They suggested that too many journalists don't either travel to Africa or China or don't research what they are writing about to the degree they should. Approaching a topic as sensitive as Chinese development in Africa from a UK-centric perspective and showing apathy towards African development is why a disappointing level of coverage and level of engaging the debate which was evident in the quantitative content analysis. The apathy towards Chinese development in Africa is created both by the journalists and the readers. Journalists only write what will be consumed as one interviewee stated the British public has a “fairly low attention span” when it comes to Chinese development in Africa. As such journalism can only reflect the media that the public wants to hear and ultimately the public doesn't have much interest in Chinese development in Africa, which in turn leads to journalism which doesn't actively engage with this topic. Another perspective outlined by this journalist was that as the UK is such a large and powerful country its media simply focuses on their own internal news or where the UK fits into global news. This was most certainly noted in the content analysis section of the paper. They went on to say that in smaller states a greater interest and engagement in examining foreign news stories occur as these states simply have a need to examine news from outside their respective region to create media content. This outlook could contribute to the relatively

unengaging content which was noted in the content analysis but cornering this notion is difficult.

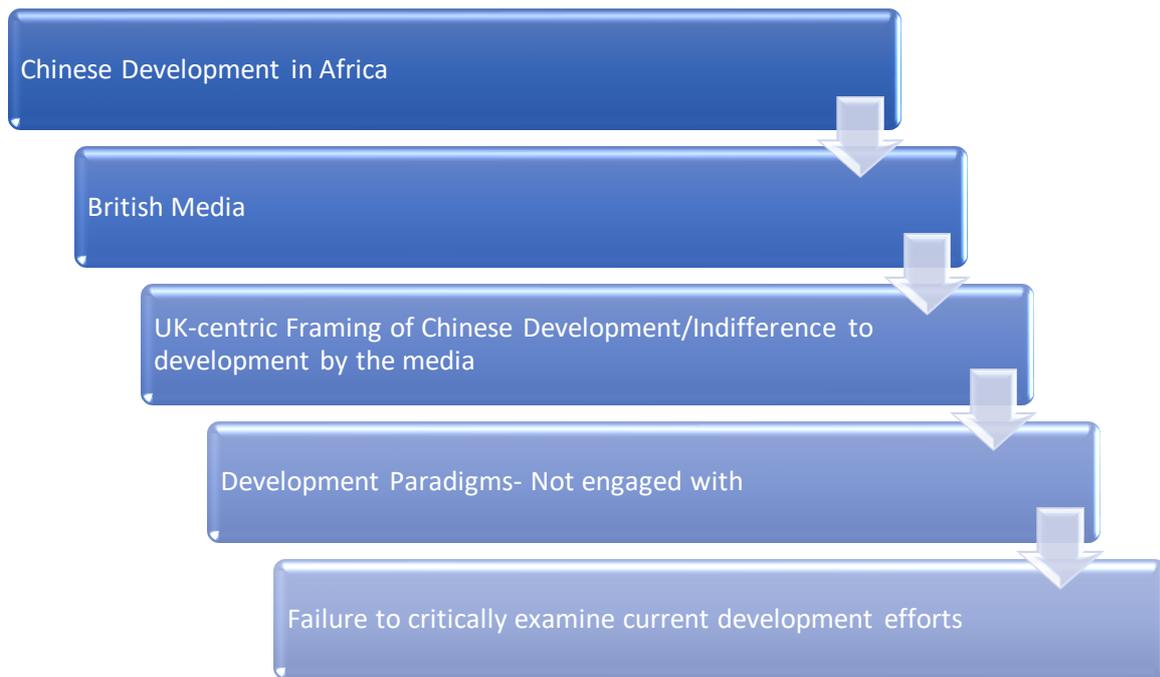
## 2. Framing of Development

This study initially hypothesised that the Chinese development when examined in the British media would be subjected to framing in the media which highlights Chinese development in negative regard which ultimately leads to Chinese development paradigms not being examined, and ultimately leading to a hegemonic development paradigm (Figure 1.2). Much of this framework and hypothesis has endured the scrutiny of the analysis, however, there are some differences which have been noted in the study. What has become apparent in both the content analysis and the interviews is that the framing of Chinese development isn't a concerted anti-China bias. The general framing of the UK news sources leads to Chinese development being viewed through a UK-centric lens. This lens displays China as a rival to British development in Africa and at times the articles adopted narratives which appeared scornful and bitter of Chinese development in a region that in the past Britain had possessed great influence. There were tropes which displayed paternalism by the British media and alluded to their colonial past. This notion was also further echoed in the interview process with two of the interviewees suggesting Britain was neo-colonial in their narratives regarding African development and there were still notions in the media which were reflective "of a time when the sun never set on the British Empire".

Aside from the UK-centric framing, the other key theme which emerged was an indifference and lack of engagement with African development in the newspapers. Of the 140 articles examined only 23 provided any meaningful critical engagement with the topic of Chinese development in Africa. This highlights the indifference and lack of critical coverage the newspapers provided. The stories often only discussed the stories of Chinese development when they contained information which was in some way related to UK politics. In the wake of Brexit, a common theme which emerged was the potential for Africa to become a greater trading partner with the UK. In the same articles, Chinese development would be mentioned in these articles as a rival to British development. In fact, in these articles, the news focussed on what the UK can get from Africa rather than what the UK can do to stimulate meaningful development in Africa, yet it was still framed as the UK doing Africa a favour through

altruistic development. From the interviews with the journalists, it was ascertained that the lack of interest from the British public in the news that doesn't concern the UK is why there is this indifference in the coverage. Each of the interviewed journalists suggested that Chinese development in Africa is not on the radar of the average person in the British public. The journalists as was explained in the interviews have an obligation to their readers and this was the primary influence which they all faced when writing their content. With the lack of public interest and the need for content which gets clicks on online sites journalists essentially are bound by the need to write content which is for the British public rather than providing content which looks at the broader state of Africa and examines Chinese development. As such, the initial framework has been edited to reflect this. UK-centric framing of Chinese development and an indifference to examining Chinese development in Africa is why there is such poor engagement in the topic of Chinese development in Africa.

As a result of the UK-centric framing and indifference to African development ultimately a critical examination of development fails to occur. As the journalist interviews highlighted the coverage of these development stories in Africa is not prevalent in the news media agenda and doesn't fit in with the narratives which are expected of journalists. As such on the back of this unengaging media coverage development paradigms are not engaged with and critical discourse regarding development fails to occur. As previously noted this doesn't necessarily contribute to a hegemonic development paradigm which suggests the promotion of a dominant paradigm of development. It does however mean that development is not critically engaged with and as such new development paradigms or alternative development paradigms fail to be explored. What results is a cycle where the public isn't interested in African development in the news, this is reflected in poor engagement with the topic by journalists who are influenced by the readership, and as such then development isn't critically examined and the prevailing forms of development continue to be poorly examined in the UK media unincumbered. Finally, a challenge to conventional Western development paradigms and meaningful change fails to occur, and African news, politics, and development remain at the bottom of the agenda and low in political saliency for the West.



*Fig 7.1 Adjusted framework exemplifying the coverage of Chinese development in Africa and how it is perceived in the British media, and the impacts of this coverage.*

### 3. Better engagement with development

The content analysis on both a quantitative and qualitative level showed a clear lack of engagement with development. The interviews with the journalists further compounded this point and it was put by some of the interviewees as being down to a simple lack of interest or care from the general public which is then reflected in the articles which are written. Despite this generally dismal image of development coverage, the journalists did provide some examples where improvement in UK journalism could be established. The primary issue according to the interviewees is journalists writing about situations from which they are very far removed. Journalists writing about African development whilst not going to Africa or not being located in Africa means their work ultimately relies on second-hand information to create the stories. Rather than engaging with the local population and stakeholders of development the British media by and large provides a hollow and distant discourse regarding development. By having journalists on the ground and adopting an intersectional approach to this journalism incorporating perspectives from the governments of states to the Chinese development representatives to the people in these African states a far more comprehensive picture of development which doesn't forget about the local populations can

be carried out. A further alternative to this which could help produce better quality development journalism is to have African journalists write for these British newspapers. One of the interviewees cited this as a huge issue in the newspaper they worked for with a newsroom which was largely British writing about things on the other side of the world that they didn't fully understand or have an interest in the topic.

Comparative journalism also can provide a greater understanding of development granted with more effort involved in writing the news stories. By utilising comparative methods to perhaps combat some of the easy tropes of Chinese development and directly compare them with Western development or previous development attempts a better comprehension of development could occur. Though this is unlikely to happen as it doesn't fit with the current media narrative the interviewed journalists highlighted it would be conducive to a more critically engaged accurate media narrative which challenges traditional narratives.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has made strides in getting African development included in the UK media sphere. The charity has so far committed \$3.5 million "to support The Guardian to produce regular reporting on global health and development topics in its Global Development section". This funding actively brings attention to issues which otherwise would not be covered by the British media in all likelihood. This funding ultimately is still under the eye of the Guardian, so a UK-centric view and perhaps the existing narratives still won't be challenged. Still bringing this agenda of coverage of developing world stories can only be seen as a positive to help bring the developing world into the public conscience of the UK public and create an interest in development. If this interest could be increased ultimately a more critical narrative of development could be established by public demand and ultimately better engagement in the UK media would result.

## VIII. Conclusion

Examining development in Africa is a difficult task and undoubtedly if one receives information on African development via news media they will be subjected to a framing bias. Ultimately this study through the qualitative and quantitative content analysis and the interviews with journalists has highlighted the dialogue which occurs around Chinese development and how Chinese development unfurls in Africa. What has become abundantly clear is that when seeking a source of development China offers an alternative to traditional western development. Chinese development differentiates itself from Western development primarily by investing in infrastructure, providing development with fewer imposed conditionalities, and with cheaper interest rates. This alternative as has been established isn't necessarily better or worse, however, it is clear from this study that it is subjected to framing in the British media. Both Chinese development and Western development have major flaws and criticisms and as such for developing states to take on board development investment they must choose the least bad option. Development, whether it gives exploitative access to natural resources as a consequence, or leads to paternalistic relations with the developed world, is not all positive.

As has been established, in the British media Chinese development is portrayed through a UK-centric lens which ultimately shows China as a rival to British development. This UK framing ultimately fails to open doors of dialogue regarding development and fails to bring critical perspectives to the UK public. This could lead to the construction of a hegemonic development paradigm, however, the lack of critical engagement with development as a whole means there is even a lack of discussion regarding any development paradigm. The interviews conducted as a part of the methodology highlight this notion. The journalist's general requirement to adhere to the same narratives regarding development and a general lack of interest by the general public in African development means these stories of development aren't being critically engaged with. This adherence to previously established narratives isn't an overt bias, but as outlined in the interviews is a consequence of British newspapers writing for a British public who ultimately are indifferent to news outside of the UK sphere of influence. For development studies as a whole, the lack of critical engagement, dialogue, and public interest means that there is a lack of desire to improve or enact more efficient development policies. As such development studies are currently trapped in the

realm of academia and will continue to fail to break into public discourse and or be challenged to any meaningful level. The concluding implication for development studies as a whole is disheartening and changes to the status quo are unlikely to occur any time soon in the current media sphere.

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